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August 28, 1883.

Vol. XIII.

Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 318.

KER-WHOOP, KER-WHOO! Or, The Tarantula of Taos On the War-Path.

A Tale of Vengeful Apache Hags, and of the "Citz" of Sardine-box City, Arizona.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM"—Major Sam S. Hall,

AUTHOR OF "OLD ROCKY'S BOYEES," "GIANT GEORGE," ETC., ETC.



AROUND AND AROUND IN THEIR HELLISH DANCE FLEW THE HIDEOUS HAGS, FIRST CIRCLING ONE WAY AND THEN ANOTHER.

Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!

OR,

The Tarantula of Taos on the War-Path.

A Tale of Vengeful Apache Hags, and of the "Citz" of Sardine-Box City, Arizona.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM,"

(MAJOR SAM. S. HALL.)

AUTHOR OF "THE TARANTULA OF TAOS," "GIANT GEORGE," "OLD ROCKY'S 'BOYEES,' ETC., ETC."

CHAPTER I.

ORDER OUT OF CHAOS.

SARDINE-BOX CITY, situated in the Pinaleno Range of mountains in southeastern Arizona, had a most peculiar history, the citizens being actors in many most tragic and also comic scenes, before the burg could be said to have become established as a real *bona fide* success.

Many times the "Sardines," as the "citz" were in the habit of terming themselves, were put to such desperate straits that they about made up their minds to jump the Box, and git up an' git for more remunerative diggings. But events always occurred at the nick of time which served to change their minds, and influence them to keep their grip and hang on, hoping against hope; and eventually they were rewarded by the discovery of a rich lead in a most unexpected and peculiar manner. This was by the blowing up of the Slip-up mine by the Tarantula of Taos, as detailed in Beadle and Adams' HALF-DIME LIBRARY, No. 297.

This cowardly act, done with the intention of ruining the town and for revenge upon the benefactress of the burg—Mrs. Lena Reynolds, *nee* Lawrence, known as the Angel of the Pinaleno Range—had proved a blessing in place of a curse, as had been intended.

Assailed at different times by bands of desperate bandits, as well as by the merciless Apaches who prevented extended prospecting operations, the miners had, to say the least, a terrible time to maintain their position. Not only this; for there were but few advantages for "wash" in the canyons and gulches in the foot-hills, where at first after heavy rains impecunious miners, who had flocked to the new town, had found the sand to pan out rich.

Some pocket-gold had been struck along the range, and the Slip-up mine promised much, provided capital enough could be raised to purchase quartz-mills, furnaces, and all the necessary appliances for working the lead.

However, there was not dust enough in the whole burg to pay even for the transportation of the requisite machinery for the Slip-up, and the mine and town were expected soon to slip up or become a busted lay-out. But a chain of most astonishing events culminated in securing everything required, but only to be followed by the blowing up of the mine, as mentioned.

This revealed one of the richest veins of ore that had ever gladdened the hearts of even the old "49-ers," three of whom had located in Sardine-box City and lingered until they had spent their last dollar, when it became a matter of impossibility for them to get to any other point without hoofing it, and that through the most dangerous and sterile portions of the wild border.

In the first story of the "Giant George" series, No. 246, the celebrated scout, just mentioned, having sworn to avenge his friend and pard, Sam Lawrence—who had been shot by El Capitan, the leader of a band of outlaws whose head-quarters was in a cave up the range—entered Sardine-box City in partial disguise, with his inseparable companion Don Diablo, a most intelligent *burro*, or donkey, for the purpose of capturing a bandit spy who was in the town.

Sam Lawrence, who had been assassinated by El Capitan, but a short time previous to his death had written to his sister, Lena Lawrence, in St. Louis, detailing the circumstances of his being shot and sending a chart, by means of which Lena could find the gold he had secreted, for the unfortunate young man had struck it rich. He requested his sister to come to Arizona, and get Giant George to guide and guard her until the gold should be found.

El Capitan, whose real name was Willoughby, with Sam Lawrence, whom he murdered, and a young man named Reynolds, had been school-mates in St. Louis. Reynolds and Willoughby had been lovers of Lena, who engaged herself to the former, when Willoughby took an oath of revenge, which he never lost sight of.

He succeeded in separating Lena and his rival while the latter was in New York on business by intercepting and forging letters. He then effected the ruin of the girl's father by inducing him to invest his all in "wild-cat" mining-stock; and then persuaded Sam Lawrence to accompany him to the West.

Willoughby shot and robbed Sam in Colorado but the latter recovered and went to Arizona, where he was very successful. Here, however, he was discovered and again shot by Willoughby, who had become the leader of a gang of bandits known as the "Panthers," Willoughby himself going by the cognomen of "El Capitan."

The bandit had expected to find the gold of his victim, but was disappointed.

But to return to Giant George.

The scout entered the town, "spotted" Sport, the spy of the "Panthers," put the outlaw on his burro, and with leveled revolvers, ran him through the town, having, as he termed it, got on a "jim-jamboree."

A large crowd of the "citz" congregated in the Nugget Hotel, rushed out, and Giant George "got the drop" on them; in fact, ran the burg for a short time. At length Black Ben, whom the scout knew to be one of the Panthers, rode up, not dreaming that he would be recognized.

Giant George at once "jumped" and killed the outlaw in a bowie-knife conflict; Sport, in the mean time, having incited the citizens against the scout, whom they did not know in his disguise.

"The 'citz,' infuriated, dragged George down with the intention of hanging him to a mesquite near a big canyon at the south of the burg. As it happened, however, Lena Reynolds had arrived in the stage from Gold Gulch, and from the window of her room in the Nugget Hotel saw the scout being dragged away by the lynchers and recognized him as the friend of her brother who had been with him when he died and had buried him in Dead Man's Gulch.

Arming herself at once, Lena Reynolds rushed to the street, sprung upon the horse of the dead bandit, Black Ben, and galloped to the mesquite, as the mob were about to hang Giant George, thus saving his life by her daring and at the same time greatly impressing the "citz" by her beauty.

The giant scout then revealed himself to the "citz" and proved to them by an examination of Black Ben's saddle-bags, that he and Sport belonged to the Panthers. The spy at once was voted to the vacant position on the mesquite tree.

The same night Lena Lawrence, who had been dubbed by the citizens, "The Angel of the Penarlayno Range," disguised herself in the buckskin suit that had been her brother's and, under the guidance of Giant George, went to visit the grave in Dead Man's Gulch.

After they had left, the Panthers dashed through the burg, killing several of the "citz," and losing one of their number, who was shot from his horse by Marm Holbrook, the landlady of Nugget Hotel.

The arrival of Lena had, however, become known to El Capitan, her former lover, and while she was weeping over her brother's grave and Giant George was preparing their lunch at a distance, she was captured by two bandits, and carried to their cave.

The scout, finding that she had been abducted, hastened to the cave by a secret entrance, sending "Terrif," a cowboy, for the "citz," to attack the bandits in their stronghold from the main entrance.

Meanwhile, Reynolds, the alienated lover of Lena, having become aware of the perfidy of Willoughby and of the pilgrimage on which she had gone, had hastened to follow her, arriving in time to take an active part in her rescue; in fact, killing with his own hand the miscreant who had been the curse of himself and of the Lawrence family.

The powerful band of outlaws were entirely "cleaned-out" by the "citz" and Giant George, with Terrif and Reynolds, entering the cavern by a secret opening, discovered in a branching cavity of the same, the gold of the murdered Sam Lawrence.

The "citz," on their return, ran wild. The whole burg got on a "jim-jamboree," and to end it up, Lena and young Reynolds were mar-

ried—the first wedding ever solemnized in Sardine-box City.

The fair bride promised to purchase mills and furnaces for the "Slip-up," and gave a handsome sum to each miner who had been engaged in her rescue; she and her husband then departing for St. Louis, the giant scout and Don Diablo accompanying them.

The burg remained in a stagnant state for three months, when Arizona Jack, from Wilmington, Del., arrived; and, about the same time, the stage from Gold Gulch brought Giant George with his burro on top.

Lena Reynolds was within the coach, but this was unknown to the "citz," she being under the influence of drugs, having lost her husband, sister and father, by yellow fever, within a few days of each other. Lena was but the ghost of her former self, and having no near relatives living, her one wish was to return to Sardine-box City.

The "citz" ran wild at the sight of Giant George, took the horses from the coach, and dragged it wildly toward the canyon. It was night, and these excited individuals knew nothing of the "Angel" being in the stage, Giant George intending to give them a surprise; but a surprise awaited him and them, for the Apaches entered the burg, and fired the shanties, all the "citz" being at the canyon with the coach, and Arizona Jack (Johnny Burke) being the only man in town.

The bravery of the latter, in this crisis, caused Giant George to adopt him as a pard.

The "citz," seeing the blaze of the shanties, left Lena and Marm Holbrook in the coach, and Hank Holbrook with Don Diablo on top of it—the former being dead drunk—and rushed for the town. The Apaches came, surrounded the "hearse," and carried Hank, his wife, and Lena away; the latter, from her pale face and black robes, impressing the Indians with the conviction that she must be "Big Medicine."

Terrif, the cowboy, was captured, and tortured in a horrible manner at Dead Man's Gulch; where Arizona Jack, at the discovery of the dying man by Giant George and the "citz," had a terrific fight with an Apache brave, whom he knifed, causing the "Sardines" to set him down as XXX on account of his skill and daring bravery. The Apaches were attacked and "cleaned out," their bodies and camp tricks burned, and the captives rescued. With them was a beautiful Castilian girl, Marietta Refugio, who had been captured at Santa Rita Ranch, near Tucson. Her mother, who, in an insane condition, had followed the Apaches, joined the citizens in the fight, and proved herself a terror, by slaying El Orso, the Apache chief.

This woman, crazed by the abduction of her daughter, and known as Juanita the Wild, had started alone upon the trail, having in vain called upon the citizens of Tucson to go in search of Marietta.

The squaws of the Apaches arrived at the range, to join their braves, just previous to the fight, and escaped among the foot-hills with half-a-dozen wounded warriors. There they remained for some days, frantic for revenge, and capturing a bandit who was making a false trail for the purpose of deceiving Giant George in connection with a second abduction of Lena Reynolds.

This was instigated by Lena's nearest relative, a cousin, who had followed her from St. Louis, with the view of securing, through her murder, her fortune.

This wretch was slain by Giant George, as he was about to plunge a knife into the heart of Lena, as she lay senseless in a cavern, on the opposite side of the range from Dead Man's Gulch, where she had, a second time, been taken from her brother's grave, by some bandits quartered in the range.

The machinery, mills and furnace having arrived, and being unloaded in the basin by the jubilant "citz," under the superintendence of Tom Jones, the sheriff, the bandits, in the pay of the "Angel's" cousin, attacked the "citz," killing several, but they were eventually whipped, the leader and two others being hanged on the mesquite near the canyon.

During all this, the peculiar characters of the town had various amusing as well as tragic adventures. Marm Holbrook and her husband Hank, came in for more than their share of these.

"The Tarantula of Taos," a self-termed border hero, but in reality a rambling outlaw, fonder of brag and "terrantaler-juice" than of fighting, had been hired to blow up the Slip-up mine; and this was the means of disclosing to Tom Jones a rich lead below the one that had

at first been discovered. This fact ran the whole burg again wild. The mills and furnaces had not been much injured by the explosion, or by the wild stampede of the oxen into the basin, which had caused the first stampede of the citizens, previous to the attack of the bandits.

This new excitement prevented the scouts from guarding Juanita and her daughter back to Tucson, to the husband and father, who, they knew, must be frantic with grief.

The Tarantula of Taos, after blowing up the mine, escaped; he having in an hour or two of amusing intercourse with Hank Holbrook, previous to his infamous act, "pumped" the landlord of the Nugget Hotel, getting the history of the town and its leading citizens, who are our principal characters in this series of mining-town stories.

The Tarantula proceeded down the range, intending to profit, if possible, by the knowledge he had gained from the drunken host of the Nugget.

Everything being now restored to something like order and tranquillity, Giant George and Arizona Jack determined to delay no longer in returning Donna Juanita Refugio, who since the recovery of her daughter had regained her reason, to her friends in Tucson.

This narrative will give, in detail, their adventures, besides keeping the reader posted in regard to the experiences of the peculiar characters of Sardine-box City. The infuriated and vengeful squaws of the slain Apaches are now to act a part in this true-to-life tale of the wilds of Arizona; and in which will be depicted the singular character of the Tarantula of Taos.

Sardine-box City was located at the foot of the range, running parallel with the same, and the Gold Gulch stage-road entering the town from the north, and down a steep decline; a deep canyon being at the south of the town, and extending up the range, past Dead Man's Gulch, to the scene of the fight with the Apaches, which was five miles from the burg.

The Pinaleno Range ran northwest and southeast, Tucson being a hundred miles southwest of a pass through the range, which was forty miles below Sardine-box City.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANDIT'S DOOM.

THE lower disk of the setting sun seemed to be resting upon the far-away plain, as if brought to a stop in its western course, by the hellish scene illumined by its blood-red rays.

The evening was hazy, a quivering heat arising from the prairie foot-hills and wide-strewn rough boulders, proving that the god of day had shot down his fiery arrows from a brazen sky since first appearing above the horizon.

A scene it was, to appall the beholder, and the sounds that cut the evening air would chill the marrow in his bones.

Stretching away to the northwest and southeast, was the Pinaleno Range of mountains; their sides, rent, rough and rugged, now tinted with the farewell glare of the setting sun; the crevasses, gulches, and serpentine cracks showing plain and black.

Down at the base of the range, amid the foot-hills, the view was somewhat relieved by more luxuriant *mottes* of pine and cedar; a deeper green marking the foliage and the grass, the latter, however, growing only in small patches between rock-strewn hollow and sandy hillside.

A mile from the base of the range the foot-hills came to an end; the level, limitless plain stretching westward and southward. Deep canyons, and branching wash-outs or gullies, formed during heavy rains by the mountain torrents, wound here and there between the rocky boulder-strewn hills; and vast natural basins, with irregular walls of rock fringed with *cacti*, were to be seen at different points.

It is to one of these almost circular basins that we wish to draw the attention of the reader, in which the only signs of animal life within the scope of man's vision are the buzzards, that soar, on wide-spread wings, afar up into the sky.

This basin is of some two acres in extent, its western side-walls being about the height of a man, the same becoming gradually higher toward the range.

In the middle of the basin, the bed of which is level and grass-grown, is driven a stake, and to it is bound a man; but thank God! the small circular hole in the center of his forehead, undoubtedly made by a bullet, proves that he is incapable of suffering by sight or sound, or torture of the flesh.

Full three-score of paint-daubed Indians are

circling around him in a hellish dance, all seeming to be frantic with suppressed fury.

At the base of the walls of the basin, lariatd to cedar bushes along the same, are a circle of wild-eyed mustangs, which, regardless of the horrible hubbub, tear the grass from the sod with avidity.

That which is most singularly noticeable about these Indians is, that there are not half a dozen warriors in the party; nearly all of them are hideous squaws, fiendish hags, compared to whom the witches of Macbeth would have seemed angels.

Wild and tangled hung their long, black, coarse hair; flying about their forms, and at times veiling their frightful faces, as they went on in their hellish dance.

The corpse is that of the bandit who led Giant George on a false trail, to enable his comrades to bear away, through the rocky pass in the range, their senseless captive, Lena Reynolds.

The scout had followed the trail until he heard the exultant yells of the Apache hags, who were about to torture the captive bandit, when George crawled through the mesquites, and to prevent the horrible sufferings to which the wretch was doomed, put a ball through the captive's brain, from his covert; thus cheating these hags out of the satisfaction it would have given them.

Infuriated to frenzy, the squaws had bounded in pursuit of the unknown man who had shot their captive; but the scout escaped, and galloped off on the true trail of the abductors of the "Angel of the Range."

We open our narrative upon the return of the maddened Apache squaws, now frantic and furious at the slaying of their braves by the "citz," and insanely eager for revenge. So, too, are the half-dozen warriors, who have nearly recovered from their wounds; the only survivors, except one, of El Orso's war-party.

A squaw has been dispatched to inform the head chief, Victorio, of the annihilation of El Orso and his braves, and a demand from the squaws for vengeance, they declaring that they will not return to their village until they have, in some manner, had revenge for the slaying of their lords and masters, whose cremated remains they, as yet, have not dared to visit, fearing an attack from the infuriated "citz."

However, they had determined to leave their hiding-place and hasten to the scene of the terrible fight between the whites and reds, and were starting upon that mission when the bandit galloped up the canyon, with a horse in the lead, upon the saddle of which was secured a stone of over a hundred pounds in weight. This had been arranged to lead Giant George to believe that Lena Reynolds was upon the beast, a captive, the bandit having started from Dead Man's Gulch at the same time that his comrades abducted Lena and hastened through the rocky pass, leaving no trail, as a matter of course—the trail of the single bandit, leading a second horse, deceiving the scout, as had been planned.

There was no chance for escape, for the doomed bandit had galloped at headlong speed around a curve in the canyon, and directly into the midst of the exultant Apache squaws, who at once made him a prisoner, and condemned him to torture—a doom which he would have suffered had not the bullet from the revolver of the giant scout pierced his brain.

There were many among the squaws who truly believed that the death-pale captive, clothed in black, and who, El Orso had asserted, was "Big Medicine," had brought destruction upon the war-party; that she had been sent by the Bad Spirit to curse and destroy the Apaches.

All knew, or believed, that El Orso was dead, or he would have shown himself ere this, and they wished to search for his remains. If he was not dead, they, in their superstition, believed that the "big medicine squaw with the snow-face" had lured him away to torture him, and then to banish his spirit beyond the moon, where he would roam forever, hungry, thirsty and cold, with no water to drink, no game to eat, and where neither grass nor trees grew. There he would not be allowed to sit or to lie down, but he hurried on, forever and forever, in an endless *journada*, over flint-strewn plains, leaving a trail of blood from his moccasins feet.

Around and around in their hellish dance flew the hideous hags, first circling one way and then another. Blood-curdling yells came from their throats at every bound, while their knives cut the air in circles about their heads, keeping time to their devilish dance by swaying their arms as they yelled—a veritable vocal and opti-

cal pandemonium in that isolated basin, the frame-work of which added to the unearthly scene.

The single, wide-reaching circle of whirling, hopping hags suddenly changed to two smaller ones, the inner one being much nearer the ghastly corpse, the outer circle whirling one way and the inner another. The hideous hags were so near each other that their long hair flew into each other's faces, forming a whirling mass as they dashed right and left.

For full five minutes this hell of sounds filled the air, the devilish dance continuing, when with most horrible whoops, the six paint-daubed braves sprung through the circle of squaws, and with their scalping knives in hand, went whirling around the corpse with electric-like velocity.

This for a moment only; then, with a terrific yell, one sprung forward, clutched the hair of the dead bandit, circled his knife around the senseless head, and tore the scalp, ears included, from the skull.

Again the hellish dance went on; the reeking scalp being waved exultantly in air, while the yells and whoops increased. Then another brave darted forward, and with a powerful downward cut of his knife, laid open the breast of the corpse, tearing out the pulseless heart, which he divided into six portions, and distributed among his brother braves. Each warrior thrust his share into his mouth, and devoured it like a wild beast; the squaws still whirling in their hellish dance, and filling the air with fiendish yells.

Then the braves bounded out from the dance, the squaws giving a peculiar whoop, and again forming it to one wide-spreading circle; but changing their ground, in order that all might pass within two feet of the mutilated body of the bandit.

Then their movements became more rapid, their yells more piercing, vengeful and exultant; and each as she passed the corpse, stabbed the same fiercely, her black, snake-like eyes glittering in a terrible manner.

When this frightful ceremony was over, the body of the outlaw was little more than a reeking mass of mangled flesh; in fact, but little flesh was left upon the bones, it being hacked in every direction, falling piece by piece to the ground.

A mass of brush and deadwood was then piled about the stake, and set fire to, soon consuming all that remained of the unfortunate wretch, who had, it may have been, through long continued misfortune in the mines, or when insane from drink, been induced to become a border bandit—forced to adopt that life or starve!

Who knows, but that a wife and babes in the far East, were anxiously awaiting a letter from him; or eagerly watching, hoping and praying for his return to them. But, thank Heaven! if such were the case, they never knew of his terrible fall from honesty to outlawry—they will never know of his most horrible fate!

When the body was consumed, a stake, which had been stained with the blood of the bandit was driven into the earth, and the scalp secured to its top.

Then commenced the most devilish dance ever witnessed by civilized man—the war-dance of the Apaches—which ended in a grand simultaneous rush of all the hideous hags toward the stake to get possession of some portion of the scalp, if but a single hair; all fighting like fiends, clutching the trophy, and twitching it from each other, and tearing it with their teeth like wild beasts. Thus they wrangled, a mad and howling mob of hellish hags, scratching each other, and hurling each other to the earth; clutching in madness until the scalp of the hated white skin was torn to shreds by these murder-mad, struggling squaws, who, having tasted revenge by capturing one white victim, were frantic for more—furious to avenge the warriors that had been slain.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARTING.

SARDINE-BOX CITY consisted of but one street, on each side of which was a line of slab shanties, some with flat and some with peaked roofs. The Nugget Hotel was on the right as you passed south through the town, and was somewhat larger than any other building in the burg. Marm Holbrook was always boasting that she had the "only glass windies in the burg," which was the fact, they serving to light up the two upper rooms beneath the peaked roof, within which one would be forced, in order to maintain a perpendicular position, to keep exactly under the ridge-pole. One of these two rooms was now occupied by Lena Reynolds.

This was designated by Marm Holbrook her "bestest room," and a sacred spot it was to her, Hank and Tom Jones, the sheriff, during the absence of the "Angel" in St. Louis. Hank and Tom frequently went up, with hats off, and stood in the doorway, when about three-fourths full of "bug-juice," to gaze upon the apartment blessed forever, in their estimation, from having been occupied by the benefactress of the burg, now, in her absence, almost a "busted burg."

Electric-like was the "flop over" when Giant George returned and announced that the machinery for the Slip-up mine was on the road.

Hank Holbrook was a short, bullet-headed lump of humanity, with a genial red face and a flaming pug nose that revealed the sad fact that he was given to sampling the contents of his bar bottles quite frequently; in fact, acting as a thermometer. Tom Jones often asserted that he could tell how many drinks Hank had poured down by "gazin' et his smeller."

So given to drink, indeed, was Hank, that it was a frequent occurrence with him to have "snakes in the boots," besides quite a variety of reptiles and beasts, both known and unknown in natural history.

Marm Holbrook was the same build as her husband; her round, good-natured, motherly face being quite as red, but from a different cause—namely, from bending over her cooking-stove.

Tom Jones was a lank, Yankee-like individual; his face was sharp as a hatchet, and he had long hair, straight and stiff as bristles. He was quite fond of his quid of "nigger-head," and never was to take a back seat when the "crystals war slid onter ther bar."

Giant George, the scout, was a man of large frame and of powerful strength of muscle and will, his heart being proportioned to his body, and he was loved and respected by every law-abiding man in Arizona. His pard, Arizona Jack, was a man of lightning-like motion, daring and reckless, and, although fresh on the frontier at the time of which we write, had, by his free and easy manner, self-sacrifice and bravery, won the respect of all. He had a splendid physique, handsome face and piercing eyes, and was intently eager to investigate frontier life in its many phases.

Giant George was attired in buckskin breeches, heavily fringed, which were thrust into cowhide boots, a blue woolen shirt and a black soft sombrero, all showing much service. Jack's clothing was much the same, except that it was more "fresh" and richly ornamented with a profusion of buttons as well as being embroidered in different colored silks, after the manner of the Mexicans. The belt of Giant George was fastened together in front by a large square clasp of solid gold, the leather richly embossed.

The clasp had engraved upon its surface the legend—

"GIANT GEORGE,

"FROM LENA REYNOLDS, *nee* LAWRENCE,

"THE ANGEL OF THE PINALENO RANGE."

The belt of Arizona Jack was a fine specimen of artistic workmanship also, and had a clasp of silver, on which was engraved—

"JOHN M. BURKE,

"(ARIZONA JACK).

"WHOOOP HER THROUGH OR BU'ST."

Mrs. Lena Reynolds, the "Angel o' ther Pen-arlayno Range," as she was called by the "citz"—she, who had passed through dangers, sufferings and grief to such an extent that it was a mystery to all that she still lived, was of slender form and pale as death; the recent death of her father, sister and loving husband, to whom she had been married but three short months, having so prostrated her with grief and anguish as to bring her to the very gates of death. She had remained unconscious when captured by the bandits until released shortly after by Giant George, and since then, to the great joy of all, she had seemed more like her former self.

The Senora Juanita Refugio was a lady of commanding presence, and of iron will and strong passions. She was of Castilian descent, and had an abundance of midnight hair and black, piercing eyes.

Since the rescue of her daughter, and her own recovery from partial insanity, caused by the capture of Marietta by the Apaches, she had grown retiring and silent. This was probably

from shame at having been found in such a forlorn condition, after days and nights of wild wanderings on plains and mountains and through the chaparral, in search of her lost darling.

Marietta, the rescued maiden, was an angelic being, fair as a Southern rosebud, with large and languishing dark eyes, and a wealth of ebon hair. They both looked upon Giant George and Arizona Jack as their saviors, and upon Lena Reynolds as their guardian angel.

With these necessary descriptions and explanations, we will now proceed with our tale; commencing on the second day after the "cleaning out" of the bandits and the blowing up of the Slip-up mine by the "Tarantula of Taos," which had revealed the rich "lead" beneath the old one, and caused the "citz" to run wild with joy. Hank Holbrook, from this unlooked-for luck, and from having Giant George, Arizona Jack and the "Angel" beneath his roof, got so full of his own merchandise that Tom Jones, at the request of Marm Holbrook, bore him out to the bake-oven in the rear of the "Nugget," and thrust him into the same for the remainder of the night.

The sun arose bright and gilded the peaks of the range as the horses intended for the party were led from where the animals had been staked for the night, to the front of the "hotel," fully equipped for the journey to Tucson, the saddle-bags of the scouts being filled with eatables by the ever-thoughtful and motherly landlady, who was, as her husband expressed it, "The fustest kaliker-kivered human that ever struck ther locate."

As may be imagined, there had been much weeping among the females as the time drew near for a separation. Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds had become very dear to Juanita and her lovely daughter, and *vice versa*, but their departure had already been delayed by the prostration and capture of Lena, and they well knew that Senor Refugio would be nearly insane with grief and anxiety, he doubtless having already scoured the country in search of his wife and daughter.

At last, however, the scouts ranged themselves with the "citz" along the bar for a parting drink with Hank, it being the latter's "set 'em up."

"George," said the landlord, as he slowly passed out the glasses, one by one from beneath the bar, as if he wished to delay his friends as long as possible—a tremor in his voice and his eyelids twitching nervously—"George an' Jack, I shell go plum lunnyfied arter yer hes levanted; an' ther' hes bin' sich a heft o' hellishness sloshed onter ther burg now an' then, thet I'll be 'spect-in' Paches er mail-bag-slashers ter run in on us, an' clean out ther hull fit-out."

"Some sort o' cussed hellyuns 'll burn ther burg, er blow us all up, ef they find out ther boss scout hes skuted. Tom Jones ain't nowhar when it comes ter engineerin' a reg'lar cut, slash and shoot stompede."

"Gittin' lunny ain't goin' ter sot yer back much, Hank," returned George. "Ye're used ter jim-jams; an' ef yer gits wind o' any biliousness threatenin' ther burg, pour down 'bout a quart o' bug-juice, an' go b'ilin' fer 'em."

"I'm bettin' my nag ag'in' a cotton-tailed rabbit thet yer'd skeer reds er bag-slashers when yer gits a meenadgery in yer butes."

Tom Jones rejoined indignantly:

"Dog-gone my skin ef I 'siders yer a jedge o' my caperibilities, Hank. Yer wer' allers chuck-full o' p'ison whenever thar war any one wanted ter defend ther burg, an' didn't know B from a bull's-foot. An' now, es ter a blow-up, ef hit 'u'd turn out like ther last one, I'd say, let her whiz!"

"I hopes, George, yer'll skute back this-a-way soon es yer kin, fer I'll be lonesome es a broken-leg'd biffer on ther Staked Plains. 'Sides thet, ef Hank gits ther jim-jams, I c'u'dn't manage him wo'th shucks. He's skeered ther Angel so she's goin' ter leave fer Gold Gulch, fer she knows he's goin' on a double Niagara errigate."

"Ef Hank doesn't behave hisself, I'll choke ther breathe outen him when I strikes ther Sardine-box ag'in!" threatened the giant scout, lifting his glass, as did all the others, including the landlord, the latter replying to the attacks upon him:

"Pards, yer all knows Hank, an' thet he undercomstumbles, glides, floats easy-like, without 'zac'ly knowin' hit, inter ther jim-jam state, forgittin' all 'bout his locate, biz, an' ole 'oman. I shell be purty consider'ble keerful arter this, an' not pour down more'n four fingers ter onc't, 'lowin' some fleetin' periods ter skip atween drinks; fer I swan I doesn't b'lieve I c'u'd stan' another sich hullsale meenadgery, circus an'

side-show combernation es war shoved at me las' time I gut on a jim-jamboree.

"I'll flip-flop over ther range nex' time, I reckon, an' then Marm Holbrook kin run ther 'Nugget' to suit herself. Boyees, I'm feelin' blue 'bout ther gills, 'count o' yer skutin' Tucson-way, but ther weemin must be tuck hum, I s'pose."

"Hyer's hopin' yer'll skip lively, skin through without gittin' yer heads skinned, an' levant back ter Hank an' ther 'Angel' afore soon!"

"Hyer's fun!"

"Down she goes!"

"Good luck, Hank!"

Such outcries filled the room, as the boisterous crowd drank their liquor; then Arizona Jack called for cigars, and a silence fell upon the "citz," for Marm Holbrook partly opened the door which led into the kitchen, thrust her head through and raised her hand, with the fore-finger extended in caution, as she exclaimed:

"Boyees, I wish yer'd sinmer down jist a leetle, an' ef yer hes gut ter sling gab like a passel o' ole maids, shove hit out kinder easy, fer the 'Angel' air comin' down ter see Juanita an' Marietta off, an' say bye-bye ter George an' Jack. Hit's ormighty queer that nothin' kin be did inter this burg without ther help o' whisk'."

"I'm gittin' 'cited, an' hevin' a strong appetite ter say cuss-words, which, bein' a meetin'-house woman, I orten't ter do. I'm gazin' at yer, Hank, consarn yer! I kin tell, by the look o' yer eyes, thet yer hes gut a leetle over the line, an' I swan ef yer doesn't cut off sharp, I'll chuck yer inter ther bake-oven an' plug up ther door, ontil George an' Jack levants back ag'in."

"Hush-h-h! Hyer comes ther gemernine fenders!"

With this rather lengthy warning Marm Holbrook closed the door gently, and the occupants of the bar, all of whom gazed at Hank with smothered laughter, kept silence, for they heard the women tripping down the stairs on their way to the horses in the street.

Hank rested one hand upon the bar-slab and the other on the shelf behind it, facing the door through which his spouse had delivered her address, his eyes glittering vacantly at the same after it had been closed, and his red face bearing a decidedly puzzled expression, as if he was meditating upon his probable sufferings for a drink if Marm Holbrook should fulfill her threat and imprison him in the bake-oven, if he again got overcome with drink.

Not the slightest notice did he vouchsafe to the occupants of the bar, his face wearing an absent look as thoughts plowed through his muddled brain, such as he would have maintained had he been solitary and alone.

Suddenly, however, he recovered, and placing his elbows on the counter, he rested his head in his hands and gazed at George and Jack, saying:

"Pards, I reckon I'm goin' ter hev a sorter tough time ontil yer 'roves back. Ther ole 'oman air allers on stilts when ther 'Angel' air 'round. 'Pears ter me she air gittin' lunnyfied. I swan ter cristy, hit makes me feel es though I warn't no more 'count than a cotton-tailed rabbit, an' I hev ter take a big drink ter saferfy myself that I air somebuddy."

"Ef she'd let me erlone I wouldn't pour down half ther p'ison I does."

"Be good to yourself, Hank, old boy," said Jack, quickly and feelingly. "Keep a stiff upper lip, and don't go in heavy. Take a light drink now and then, and we'll come back as soon as we can."

"There's the ladies, George! Come, Hank, shake! We're off this time!"

Arizona Jack grasped Hank's hand and gave a hearty shake, as did Giant George. The two scouts then sprang out the door, followed by the "citz" *en masse*.

Jack at once assisted Juanita and her daughter to mount, both the ladies weeping silently, as were also Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds.

The scouts, wishing to end the scene, sprang into their saddles without further ceremony.

"I shall most certainly go to Tucson and visit you soon," said Lena. "God bless and protect you and lead you to your home in safety!"

"Jist es sure es I air a meetin'-house 'oman, I'll levant Tucson-way wi' ther 'Angel,' an see yer!" burst out Marm Holbrook.

"Dang hit! Thar, I knowed I'd say a cuss-word, fer I'm e'ena'most es flighty es I war when I laid in ther bake-oven all night, when thet long legged, slab-sided, long-ha'r'd, whisk'-sucker gut Hank b'ilin' drunk, an' both on 'em went ter sleep on ther floor ahindt ther bar."

"I b'lieve my brains gut ruptur'd by ther

hellishness I've hed ter stan' o' late, an' I'm so flustered thet I didn't know my back ha'r war down. Consarn it! I ain't fit ter 'sociate with Piute squaws, feelin' es I does!"

No one save Lena Reynolds heard more than half of Marm Holbrook's words.

When the scouts waved their sombreros in farewell and galloped down the street amid the whoops and yells of the "citz," the "Angel of he Range" clasped her arm around the landlady's ample waist, and with loving words led the good woman into the "Nugget," in a more pacified state than might have been expected.

Hank stood in the bar-room door, swinging an empty bottle over his head, and yelling:

"'Rah fer Giant George an' Arizony Jack!"

"'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TARANTULA OF TAOS.

As the sun had reached meridian, on the day previous to the departure of the scouts for Tucson, with the Castilian ladies, a very strange and peculiar looking man might have been seen some ten miles down the range from Sardine-box City.

He was seated upon a projection or spur of rough rock, some twenty feet above the bed of a wild gorge in the adamantine mountains; the sides here and there, and also the base of the almost perpendicular cliff being dotted with clumps of dwarf cedar, cacti, and patches of wire-like grass, while the middle of the bed of the gorge was covered with a carpet of fresh, green, tender grass, that had evidently sprung up since the last heavy rain had formed a torrent therein.

Lariated amid this verdant grass was a long-legged, lank horse, that appeared to have seen hard service and little feed; the animal showing at the same time points for speed and endurance.

In a clump of cedars, directly below the strange lone human being, were a saddle, bridle, extra lariat, and *malettos* of buckskin; also a tin-cup, canteen and blankets, the full fit-out of a borderer.

But the man himself is deserving of closer attention; and, as he is in the habit of traversing plain and mountain alone, he is addicted to soliloquizing, which will enable us to ascertain much in regard to his adventures, character and intentions.

First, however, we will attempt to describe him.

Although seated, he betrays the fact that he is of uncommon hight, but he is remarkably thin in flesh.

His limbs are unusually long, although not disproportioned to his body; and his muscular development proves him to be possessed of extraordinary strength.

His hair is long, matted and tangled; and mingled with it are the dead needle-like foliage of the pine tree, with grass and burs, proving that a comb is not included among his belongings.

His hatchet face is in color nearly like that of an Indian, so tanned is it by the southern sun, and his continual life in the open air.

His eyes are bloodshot and wild, wandering suspiciously here and there, as if apprehending danger at any moment, and from any point.

At his belt, which sustains greasy and ragged buckskin breeches, hangs a pair of Colt's army "sixes," and a huge bowie. Cowhide boots, a blue woolen shirt, that has long been a stranger to soap, and a crumpled, wrinkled, black sombrero, with wide brim, make up his costume; all in such condition that he might well, in a more civilized locality, be taken for a scare-crow.

As we introduce him to the reader, his elbows rest upon his knees, his lank hands clasp his cheeks, his chin is upon his palms; and although in this position, his jaws are working energetically, while at times he ejects a prodigious stream of tobacco-juice afar over the cedar-tops below him.

Suddenly he changes his position, leaning back against a loose rock, and grasping a decanter that stands by his side, and which is about one-third full of whisky.

Holding the bottle at arm's length, he indulges in soliloquy:

"Dang hit, an' double dang hit! Ef I doesn't feel bilious when I gaze at yer, thinkin' what in thunderation I'll do when ye're empty. Dog-gone ef I c'u'd tell ef I war ter be hung! I swar thet word flopped outen my beef-trap afore I thort it!"

"S'pect I will git strung up a limb some considerable afore a month o' Sundays. Whar war I? Now, I recommembers. I hopes ter be

hashed by a grizzly b'ar ef I c'u'd calkerlate how long I hes bin in this hyer locate. I've bin a snoozin' nighly all ther time, an' when I did open my peepers, nobuddy c'u'd prove by me who I war, er whar I war.

"Hit's cussed lucky thet I war so ormighty sick thet my stumjack wouldn't 'low whisk' ter scout 'roun' inter hit, er ther bottle would 'a' bin empty, an' I'd bin plum crazy. Ef I should hev much more jim-jams hyer, hit 'u'd be ther last o' ther Terrantaler.

"Wonder what air goin' on inter Sardine-box? I reckon I woked up ther burg some consider'ble by blowin' up ther Slip-up; an' I've gut ter come roun' ter biz an' ruminate over ther siterwation o' things.

"Thar's 'bout fourteen hundred and forty swarms o' bees in my kerbase, an' all on ther hefty biz-buzz. My head aire swelled 'nough I reckon ter 'commerdate thet amount without crowdin' 'em. But whisk' 'll make 'em flicker, an' down she goes! Hit'll take ther hull o' what's hyer ter put me on ther squar' level toward futur' perceedin'."

As he spoke he glued the decanter to his lips, and took a deep draught with evident satisfaction; in fact, with insane eagerness. He then pressed his hot brow with his claw-like, dirty fingers, as he replaced the decanter on the rock by his side with great care, all the time sweeping the gorge and cliff sides with suspicious gaze, and finally fastening his eyes upon his horse, the only familiar object in the wild vista, the only link that bound him to the past, acting as a reminder and leading his thoughts in an inexplicable manner into a channel that conducted him to a comprehension of his recent experiences.

The expression of his face changed quickly from mirth to rage, fear, terror, and self-condemnation, and, in turn, these feelings would change to others, proving that the man's mind was in a most demoralized condition.

Quickly he grasped the bottle again, and took another deep draught, after which his eyes grew less wild, and his expression more free from the dread apprehension that had been most noticeable.

Again he broke out in soliloquy:

"Double-up an' dang me, ef I hain't bin ther worstest mixed pilgrim on ther range! But ther ding-dong air a-comin' back inter my iron heart, an' ther buzz-buzz in my mammoth brain air simmerin' down, an' kinder flickerin' inter a soothin' lullerby, produced by Hank Holbrook's soothin'-syrup, which air likewise perducin' a hefty lump in my errigatin' pipe by gittin' down purty near ther bottom o' ther bottle.

"I swar, I know I shill hev more jim-jams, ef I gits out o' whisk'; fer when I woked up from my len'thy see-ester, I see'd more cur'ous anermiles squatted 'roun' on ther rocks then Barnum ever hed in all the menadgeries since he began bamboozlin' ther folkses in civerlize with a one-hoss side-show.

"Ther bottom of this hyer big crack, in ther range war kivered with all sorts an' sizes o' snakes; an' I'll swar I see'd one swaller my critter without winkin' er stoppin' ter salerwate him, ter make ther boss go down easy like. Thet's what made me conclude ter crawl up hyer.

"I reckon hit war 'bout es speedy a crawl—an' I'm gamblin' on hit—es ever any human tuck in his'n. I tored my bestest an' only wardrobe, 'sides my meat, an' I'm jammed up some consider'ble. I'm stiff es a wagon-tongue, an' purty well sot back all 'roun'."

"Howsomever, I'm dang'd sertain thet ther 'citz' o' Sardine-box don't s'picionate thet I'm ther pilgrim thet blowed up ther Slip-up. Nobuddy see'd me, I reckon, 'ceptin' Hank, though thar must 'a' bin one human 'sides him, fer he war plum' asleep when I gut ther baptize abint ther bar.

"Mebbe so hit war Marm Holbrook? Hit warn't a trick thet anybuddy 'ceptin' a kaliker-kivered human 'ud ever think of. Ef hit hed bin one o' ther 'citz,' he'd 'a' plug'd me with his 'six,' an' axed me who I war arterward. Thet's 'bout ther biz, I reckon; an' I'm goin' ter skate back, an' lay fer chances ter kerral whisk' enough ter last me ter Tucson, ef I does hev ter run chances o' gittin' elerwated up ther mesquite, et ther eend o' a lariat.

"Nobuddy orter buck ag'in' a lost orphin like me, 'specially in my condish.

"I'll take another snifter. I'm gittin' ter feel more nat'ral-like—doggone ef I ain't."

Again the decanter was raised to the trembling lips, and a deep draught was poured into the large mouth of this strange individual; he again holding the bottle upward, while regret at the rapid diminution of the whisky forced

back much of the satisfaction and relief the drink afforded him.

Half of the liquor that had been in the decanter had disappeared, and this fact seemed to affect the drinker greatly for some moments; but he banished and repudiated all thought of the subject, drinking again and again. Then, rising to his feet with difficulty, and standing erect, but in a swaying condition, and still clutching the decanter, as if his very life depended upon its contents—as perhaps, in his deplorable condition, it did—he stood trembling for some minutes.

But the tall form of the lone wanderer did not long remain unsteady. Soon he brought down his boot, hard, upon the rock, and by mere force of will became steady as that rock itself; apprehension and nervous dread having apparently left him, his muscles contracting, his blood circulating with lightning-like rapidity—the change produced by the fiery poison that he had drank.

"Ther skin o' ther snake air good fer ther bite," he cried out in a self-satisfied voice. "I 'gins ter feel like myself ag'in. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos! Doesn't yer hear ther ding-dong o' my iron heart? I'm a border hero! I snoozes on ther tip-top peaks o' ther rockies, above ther flip-flop o' ther buzzards' wings.

"I war borned with a full set o' grinders, an' when I strikes hit rich, I shows my quartz, 'stead o' purchasin' a mill. I drinks a gallon o' bleed every mornin' an' takes contracts startin' stiff-yards. I'm a roarin', ragin' terror when I gits on ther war-path; an' I've bin knowed ter howl so loud an' un'arthly thet a hunderd painted 'Paches jumped from thar critters, crawled inter perrarer-dog holes out o' pure shame, an' never war see'd since. Reckon they're crawlin' thar till yit; an' ll fotch up, an' strike fresh breathe in Chinee, whar they'll find the longest ha'ed humans ter scalp thar bees in ther worl', ginerly speakin'.

"I'm a ole he cantankerous cuss, an' sp'ilin' wi' prussic acid mad, hankerin' ter cut, slash, an' shute with any fourteen hundred and forty-four pilgrims what's gut sand enough ter buck ag'in' me. I'm a lost orphin on short whisk'; but when I lets off a long breathe, bowlders trembles, an' cedars snap off, jist fer fun, ter start a circus!

"Whoop-er-up! Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm lewantin' toward ther nighest whisk' et stompede-speed, an' I'll kerral some er bu'st! I'll bamboozle Hank, an' skeer Marm Holbrook ontill she sheds her back ha'r.

"I'm ther Terrantler o' Taos, an' I never lost a leg. I've gut heaps o' dust, but ormighty leetle whisk'. Ker-whoop! Cl'ar ther track fer ther Terrantaler o' Taos; er ye'll flip-flop speedy 'over ther range' ter 'grim-land!'

With these concluding words, the Tarantula of Taos sprung down the rough, jagged rocks, at the risk of breaking his neck, equipped his horse—the animal having been gazing, with evident wonder, at its master, while he had been speaking—and, bounding into his saddle, spurred out from the range, keeping within the line of cedars, and between the same and the mountains; the decanter being still clutched, with but a small quantity of whisky remaining in it.

CHAPTER V.

APACHES ON THE TRAIL.

A NIGHT and a day have passed since the hellish dance of the Apache squaws around the corpse of the bandit, and again the bright moon lit up a most unearthly and infernal scene.

The Apache braves, who, it will be remembered, were but six in number—the wounded survivors of the war-party of El Orso—have examined every hoof-print, and every branching trail of the scouts and the "citz" of Sardine-box, and have discovered at last the mutilated bodies of their chief, and the braves who at his order, accompanied him in the pursuit of Lena Reynolds and Marietta; they having escaped from the lodge in which they had been confined, into the dense thickets in the rear of the Indian encampment, by pulling up a stake, and crawling under the skin lodge.

The braves knew what had occurred, as well by studying the "sign," as though they had witnessed the pursuit and killing of their chief and fellow braves by the scouts, and the recovery by the Arizonians of the two white squaws.

The heart of El Orso had been torn out of his breast by Juanita the Wild, the crazed Castilian woman, and his scalp torn from his head. This added fuel to the revengeful fury of the warriors and the Apache squaws, who fully believed Lena Reynolds to be "Bad Medi-

cine," an agent, that is, of the Bad Spirit, sent to lure their chief from his war-party, and cause his death.

The superstitious reverence, that had been shown her by El Orso, while she was his captive, and her very marked influence over the savage chief, causing them to form this conclusion.

The Apaches proceeded to wrap the swollen corpses of the chief and warriors in blankets, and then bound them fast with lariats. They then conveyed the bodies to the scene of the desperate fight, their former camp, where there was nothing but a huge heap of ashes now remaining of their camp tricks, and the lodges of their braves. But one comfort remained to them.

A sufficient number of the horses of the war-party had stamped, during the conflict, beyond the immediate vicinity of the camp, to give them all a mount, and each squaw had taken with her a blanket when they retreated to the thickets, as the whites charged into the camp; consequently they were not left quite helpless.

In addition to this, bows and arrows had been manufactured since the cyclone of death had swept the war-path of El Orso from the earth.

Wounded horses, left by the whites, had been slain, thus serving for food, and as we again bring the hideous horde of howling hags before the notice of the reader, they are again whirling slowly, with ghost-like movements, in an up and down motion of the body, crouching one moment to the earth, then rising to a half-bent position, and slowly circling round the ashes—all that remains of their braves—while, as each reaches a certain point in the circle, she gives a fiendish howl and jabs an arrow-head into her flesh, this death-dance and self-torture being supposed to manifest their grief for the slain.

A more horrible sight could not well be imagined, as the death-dance continues, and the bodies of the hideous squaws become gored, the blood dripping from each of them to the earth as they circle slowly around. The scene was more impressive, more horrible, than if the fiendish squaws were in energetic motion, filling the air with vengeful yells and whoops, as in the basin, when they danced round the corpse of the bandit.

But this performance did not last long; for soon their grief changed to mad and vengeful fury, and the dance to rapid and spasmodic hops. Every muscle in their bodies was brought into play, and their whole strength was exerted, as well as their vocal power. With whoops and yells at every bound, their arms beating the air, their long black hair flying wild, and their snake-like eyes blazing with a thirst for revenge, they resumed.

This lasted until their strength failed them, until their muscles refused to act, and only hoarse and gurgling sounds could be forced from their throats, the intense, insane fury which had ruled them still existing in their minds, though it was no longer in their power to express themselves.

For awhile all threw themselves upon the earth and lay panting, their forms and limbs writhing like squirming snakes, until they in a measure recover themselves. Then all, in a single file, follow the braves, four of whom bear the bodies of El Orso and the warrior who had been killed with him, the other two leading a horse.

They pass through the thickets by a narrow trail at the base of the cliff, from which the squaws had viewed the fight, and proceeded but a short distance, when they halt at the very foot of a perpendicular wall of rock, fully a hundred feet in height.

Here the leader, after a moment's inspection of the rough cliff-side, turned toward it, parting the bushes that grew at its base, when an arch-like opening is revealed, into which they all proceed, some of the squaws carrying dry dead-wood in their arms, and at once kindled a fire in the cavern, the roof and sides of which reflect the fire-light and glitter with a blinding brilliancy, as if myriads of diamonds had been set in those adamantine walls.

But little time was spent by them in preparation, or in ceremony.

The dead were laid upon natural projections of rock at the far end of the cave chamber, and the two horses were then led near to them. The squaws then joined in a most unearthly chant, as the six braves strode within ten feet of the doomed steeds, with bows in hand and arrows fitted to the string.

Three warriors stood near each horse, as thus described, the fire-light flashing upon them, their eyes glittering from out the frame-work of

white gypsum and vermilion-bars, and upon the hideous horde of hags that stood in a half-circle in the rear of the braves. These last were wild-eyed and fiendish beyond description, their bodies and arms swaying in consonance with their unearthly chant for the dead.

The frightened steeds tremble; their eyes, blinded by the light and the reflection, expressing in their depths a world of wonder and terror.

It was only for a brief space. Then the bows of all sprung upward simultaneously, and were as quickly bent, until the feathered shafts kissed the painted cheeks of the bronzed braves. Then came a sounding twang, heard through the chant of the squaws, the six arrows flew through the air as one, and with sickening thud were buried deep in the vitals of the doomed steeds.

Blood flowed from the cunningly-creased arrow-shafts, spattering upon the rock floor of the cavern, while the horses, with shrieks that were almost human, reared in the air, their life-current spurting afar, as the fire-light played upon the jets and pools of gore.

Furious and frantic bounds, and snorts of agony, soon changed to reeling, staggering and quivering; then the mustangs, with gurgling sounds, as the blood spurted from their mouths and nostrils, fell to the floor and gasped out their blood and their life.

A bow and arrow, together with a long scalping-knife, and also a quantity of half-cooked horse-meat, are laid beside the bodies; then the howls died down to silence, and the savage horde stalked out from the natural tomb into the moonlight, when they gather fragments of rock that had fallen from the cliff-side, and wall up the opening. This burial-ceremony proved that these Apaches were a branch of the tribe whose hunting-grounds are near to the Comanches; they having adopted the mode of burial of their neighbors, although they have been almost constantly at war with them.

In single file, and at a fast trot, the six warriors in the lead, they all proceeded on the back trail to the place at which they had left their horses. Then the braves, and two-score of the younger squaws, who had lost braves in the fight, and had no papposes to call them back to their village—these mount and steal slowly down toward Sardine-box City, bent on murderous revenge. The remainder gallop west at headlong speed.

The following morning the braves and squaws lay secreted near Dead Man's Gulch, awaiting the coming night that they might inspect the surroundings of the burg. They were well aware that the utmost vigilance and caution must be practiced, or they would be exterminated utterly. Their intention was to steal around the outskirts of the town, capture for the torture any stragglers who might fall into their hands, and do whatever damage to the white foe that lay in their power in a stealthy manner, and without exposing themselves to death or capture.

Upon the very night preceding the departure of Giant George and Arizona Jack with the rescued Castilian women down the range, these hideous hags, with their six attendant braves, crouched at different points among the mesquites around Sardine-box City, thirsting for revenge. The "citz" were, however, making "a night of it" at Pilgrim's Palace, and lucky it was for those of them who lived in brush-shelters beyond the shanties, and amid the boulders, that the jollification which celebrated the discovery of the new and rich "lead" by the blow-up at the Slip-up mine, combined with a general and frequent "set 'em up" on account of the departure of the two scouts, kept them in the "Palace" until the gray streaks of morning shot up eastward.

Then they decided that they would remain and see the scouts and the two ladies off; consequently the fiendish Apaches made no capture, secured no victim for the torture, and therefore crawled away, taking up positions in clumps of cedar on the side of the mountain range, and rendered doubly furious by disappointment, as well as by having discovered such a number of white men, all in the very highest spirits, in the streets of Sardine-box City.

But when the red demons, a little later, saw Giant George and Arizona Jack departing down the range with their recent captive, Marietta, who had been the cause of their leaving their village to meet El Orso—her presence having caused the halt of the war-party, and the consequent fight and destruction of the same—when they saw this, and the madwoman whose trail they had often struck, in the party also, then they were filled with exultant glee, for at once they decided that the two scouts were now

guiding and guarding the white squaws to Santa Rita, from whence, in a raid, El Orso had captured Marietta.

"Waugs" and grunts burst from their greasy and filthy throats, beast-like in intonation and most exultant, while they shot meaning glances, one to the other, all crawling from their positions down the mountain-side, and taking advantage of the attention of the "citz" being fastened upon their departing friends to make their escape unperceived. Every boulder and clump of cacti or cedar served also to shield their hideous forms from view.

A wide detour they were forced to make to gain the big canyon, where, in a sheltered bend of the same, a few of their number guarded their mustangs. Then they were obliged to gallop afar up the canyon to gain a branching wash-out, by which they reached the outer foothills.

Then passing beyond Sardine-box City, down the range for a mile or more, they again secreted themselves until night should favor their mad gallop southward in pursuit of the scouts and the white squaws, a thirst for vengeance, blood and torture maddening their brutal and merciless minds.

CHAPTER VI.

OFF FOR GOLD GULCH.

GIANT GEORGE would have felt much more anxiety in regard to leaving Lena Reynolds in the Sardine-box City had not that lady decided, previous to the departure of the scouts, to take the next stage for Gold Gulch, where she intended to stay for several days with a lady whose acquaintance she had formed when on the journey from St. Louis.

The scouts had not been gone two hours when the "hearse" rattled up to the Nugget, and Lena tripped from the "bestest room" down the stairs to the kitchen, where Marm Holbrook, with much bustling and excitement, was getting ready to accompany Lena, this arrangement having been made within the hour.

"Come, Mother Holbrook," said Lena, with something of her old vivacity, which greatly pleased the landlady, "the stage is waiting and we will have a splendid ride along the range this beautiful morning. Thirty miles will not fatigue us in the least, and I anticipate a good time in your company. We have never traveled together but once, and then as captives to those horrible Apaches."

"Bless my soul, dearie!" exclaimed Marm Holbrook, in much excitement, "don't mention the or'nary painted skunks er I shill git more flusterated then I bees. Mebbe so ther greasy, dirty torturers mought buck ag'in' ther hearse an' gobble we-uns up ag'in. Then we'd be goners, dead sure an' sartain! Ther good Lord gut us outen thet scrape, an' I hopes I'm es thankful es mought be 'spected from a meetin'-house 'oman."

"Howsomever, I doesn't opine thet He'd bother with we-uns ag'in. Ef we gits inter ther clutches o' ther red hethuns ernuther time I wouldn't gi'n a corn-buck fer my back ba'r; though I can't b'lieve thar's a human, no matter how onhuman an' savage he mought be, thet 'u'd tortur' you."

"I'm powerful full o' glad ter see yer kinder bracin' up. We-uns hes gut ter take things jist es they comes in this worl'. Ef yer know'd what I hes bin through since me an' Hank skuted from Texas, Arizone-way, yer'd take yer afferdavid thet I war though es a ole raw-hide, es I'd a flip flopper "over ther range" long ergo."

"Thar ain't no use ter git flusterated, fer Jim Doderson air pourin' down whisk' wi' Hank, an' thet 'minds me thet I'm dead sure my ole man 'll git on ernuther jim-jamboree soon es we-uns gits out o' sight. I hes seed it in his peepers since he roved back from Pilgrim's Palace et sun-up wi' ther boyees, an' I'm goin' ter lock up ther bestest room ef yeou hain't."

"I've gut a lunch fer us ter chaw on ther hearse, ef we feels a vacancy in our stummicks. This trip 'll do me a heap o' good I knows, fer I hes heerd they hes gut a slab meetin'-house slapped up in Gold Gulch. I shill 'tend every gatherin' inside o' hit, and I doesn't know but what I'll squat on ther steps atween meetin's, fer I hain't bin inside a "Cristyun fact'ry," es Hank calls 'em, fer more'n four year, an' I've fergut 'bout every hyme an' pr'ar I ever know'd. An' thet ain't 'tall strange, bein' es I hes bin sloshin' 'bout in so hefty a 'mount o' hellishness."

"Thar I go ontill I'm plum' out o' breathe, but when I does git a show ter sling gab ter a slam-up guinerwine female 'oman like yeou—"

Here Marm Holbrook came to a sudden stop, seemingly dumfounded at her own audacity, but she continued a moment after:

"I swan I didn't mean thet, dearie, fer thar ain't ernuther sich a angel es yeou bees in this hyer wicked worl'. I means ter say, when I kin git er 'oman ter gab at, I runs on ontill I doesn't know who I air er whar I air.

"Hit makes me sick 'nough ter puke my teeth out, an' my toe-nails off, ter hear ther or'nary lingo ther 'citz' an' Hank shoots off. Thar, I won't say no more. Yer knows 'bout how I hes bin siterwated, an' what I hes bin through, an' yer knows I 'preciates bein' with yer, an' I thanks ther good Lord yer come back ter Marm Holbrook, though I'm powerful sot back when I think o' ther cause o' hit.

"What did I tell yer? Didn't year hear thet howl an' laugh? Hit puts me in mind o' ther 'Paches.

"Thet's Hank, an' I knows by ther sound he's goin' ter hev 'em, an' hev 'em bad. Ef we-'uns warn't goin' ter be gone so long, I'd git Tom Jones ter help me sock him inter the bake-oven an' chuck a big rock ag'inster ther door."

The good landlady was here forced to stop for want of breath, her rotund red face being covered with perspiration, while she mopped her cheeks and brow with her long apron. She then smoothed her hair at the little mirror, and shook out the skirt of her dress.

Lena Reynolds had been quietly sipping a cup of coffee while her motherly friend had thus been rattling off, well knowing, from past experience, that Marm Holbrook would keep it up, until she could talk no more from pure exhaustion. The words of the landlady had, however, created but little interest in the mind of her invalid guest, and that for the reason that poor Lena had gone through so much sorrow in the preceding four months—one soul-torturing event following another in bewildering succession—that she had sunk into a dazed condition of mind, which was proof against being appalled by any future event, no matter how dread and horrible, that she might yet be doomed to experience.

"Ladies, I opine hit's 'bout time fer us ter rattle wheels toward Gold Gulch."

Thus spoke Jim Doderson, the stage-driver, as he thrust his head through the partly-open door, his whip in his hand.

We-'uns'll be thar in 'bout two mule squeals, Jim," returned the landlady quickly, for she well knew that Jim was anxious to be addressed by Lena, and she was resolved to disappoint him.

"I war opinin' thet yer wanted ter git outside o' 'bout four fingers o' whisk', an' ter sling gab wi' Hank, er we'd be inside yer ole hearse afore now.

"Come, dearie, le's levant; an' I wants yer ter gi'n Hank a word o' warnin', else thar won't be nothin' left o' ther Nugget when we-'uns glides back."

Lena Reynolds drank the last of her coffee, and without a word walked into the bar, followed by Marm Holbrook, with lunch-pail and bundles in her arms.

Hank's face turned a shade redder, his nose took on the color of claret, and his eye-lashes twitched nervously as Lena entered the bar.

He was forced to lean heavily back against the decanter-shelf, and brace right and left with his arms, to keep an approach to steadiness; a precaution that was in vain, for his round bald head seemed too heavy to be kept in an upright position, falling first to the right and then to the left.

"Hank," said Lena, in a pleading tone, "don't drink any more than is necessary to prevent derangement of your brain. I ask this for your wife's sake, for my sake, and for your own.

"A good, free-hearted man like you ought not to torture his system and weaken his brain with stimulants. We are going now, and I hope I shall find you well and hearty and sober on my return. I shall take good care of Mrs. Holbrook."

Hank managed to change his position by falling forward against the bar plank, upon which he leaned one elbow and supported his head with his hand.

Although very much under the influence of liquor, he was evidently abased and greatly ashamed of himself on account of the presence of the Angel; and had there been time, or had his mind been clear enough to realize that Lena had been coming through the bar on her way to the stage, he would without doubt have crawled in among his demijohns and secreted himself, thus avoiding the humiliation that was

now torturing him, notwithstanding the muddled condition of his mind. No other human being in the world would have so affected him. Lena was, in his estimation as well as in that of all the "citz," far superior to all other created beings; she was their benefactress—the Angel of the burg.

Bringing all his will-power into play, and somewhat sobered by the lady's presence, Hank strove to relieve her mind by denying that he was in the condition, which her words and manner seemed to attribute to him.

"I didn't s'pose," he said, "thet I sh'ud hev ter say by-by ter ther Angel, feelin' so or-mighty bilious an' or'nary. Hit must be thet my ole 'oman hes bin chinnin' some o' her asser-fettidy gab 'bout me.

"I war wo'ted when I gut tuck in by ther 'Paches, I knows; an' I didn't git no 'tention nor bug-juice ter keep my head squar' an' level.

"Ever since then I've bin chuck full o' chills an' nerrallergy, an' I hed ter take a pull et quinine an' whisk', er flop over, roll up in a blanket, an' lose a heap o' dust by shettin' up ther Nugget.

"Ef I've done anythin' ter make a rough riddle in yer thinkin' aprattus I'm dod-blasted sorry, an' I'll chaw my own years off right hyer afore yer gits inter ther hearse. I ain't wo'th shucks noways, an' yer needn't ter bother 'bout ole Hank.

"I shell soon be fitted ter a slab overcoat, an' be planted under ther mesquites, an' then Marm Holbrook kin run things ter suit herself, bake-oven an' all, without me."

The concluding words were spoken as Hank gazed in a wavering manner toward his spouse. Reproach was expressed as strongly as it was in his power to do it—somewhat blurred, however, by the maudlin tears that welled into his bead-like eyes as he alluded to his own death and burial. His reference to the bake-oven—in which Marm Holbrook had been forced to spend the night through fear of the Tarantula of Taos, who was, at the time, on a jamboree with Hank—maddened that good lady greatly, and she retorted with fierce indignation, and in a shrill voice:

"Hank Holbrook, yer puserlanimous ole whisk'-sucker! I hate yer es bad es I does a greasy 'Patche; an' ther sooner yer take a flop over, an' grunt out yer last breathe, an' air nailed atween slabs, ther better hit'll be fer ther burg!

"An' when yer bees planted, I hopes yer won't sprout an' come up; fer a small crop o' your sort 'ud bu'st up ther hull 'Nited States. Thar ain't ernuther sich in Arizone, thank ther Lord! Fer ther territory c'u'dn't perpel wo'th shucks, ef thar war.

"She's bin only jist on ther crawl ever since yer crossed ther line from Texas-way. I know hit's purty rough"—this she said, noticing Lena's look of reproof—"fer a meetin'-house 'oman ter be 'bleeged ter sling thet sort o' gab et her ole man; but I'll sw'ar—yes, I do sw'ar, an' I'd put in some bed-rock cuss-words ef yeou warn't hyer, Lena—I've hed 'bout es much ter put up with lately es a cast-iron 'oman c'u'd stan' without gittin' all broke up.

"But, come on! I won't waste any more breathe this-a-way. Hank, ef ther wolves, an' snakes, an' ther bull devil's menadgery gits sifted onter yer, lock up ther 'Nugget," take a bottle o' whisk', an' skute up ther range whar ye kin git fresh air, an' kin kick 'roun' without doin' much damage; er yer mought crawl inter ther bake-oven.

"I don't want ter find things mixed hyer, when I 'roves back. Ef I does, thar'll be blizzards, northers, harrycanes an' cyclones, 'nough roun' this locate, ter take every ha'r yer hes left outen yer head, afore yer can hunt a hole ter crawl inter!

"Ya-as, I'm comin', Jim! Durn his ole whisk'-soaked carkiss! He does worrytate an' flustercate me ontill I e'ena'most jump outen my socks! I've chawed my tongue 'bout half off, now."

Marm Holbrook strode like a thirsty cowboy who sees a "bug-juice bazaar" ahead, out of the "Nugget." Then, throwing her bundles viciously through the window, she climbed up the hind-wheel spokes, and crawled through the window of the coach, losing sight, in her anger and excitement of the fact that there was an easier mode of entrance.

As much as she was respected as the mother of the burg, the "citz" who witnessed this proceeding of the worthy landlady, roared with laughter, as did also Jim Doderson, the stage-driver. But Marm Holbrook was busy with her numerous packages, and happily ignorant

of the cause of their extravagant mirth, or she would have been rendered doubly furious.

As it was, she was not in an enviable frame of mind on her departure from the "locate" which had been her home for so long, and the scene of so many strange, startling, and horrible, as well as comical experiences and happenings.

Lena Reynolds lingered, with pity and genuine sympathy in her face, look, and tone, toward the poor slave of drink. She extended her hand to him as she said:

"Good-by, Hank! Please don't make yourself ill by drinking so much. I must get you into some other kind of business, I see.

"Good-by, and have more respect for yourself. You are a good, warm-hearted, generous man, and you really ought to strive to overcome your appetite for liquor. We will return, I hope, in a few days, and I trust I will find you well and happy. Again, good-by."

Hank had clung to Lena's hand as a drowning man catches at the first and last object in view. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and there was an expression upon his face that showed clearly he had no confidence in himself, and dreaded the future above all things; regretting most intensely the departure of Lena Reynolds from the "Nugget."

But before he had time to realize it, she was gone, and he heard the whip as it hissed through the air, and the wheels cranking and grating, as the stage was being turned about. Then he staggered around the bar, supporting himself by a grip on the slab, and thus gained the door, where he stood, bracing himself with both hands, one on each side.

Then, with all the strength of his lungs, he yelled:

"'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Rangel!"

CHAPTER VII.

LYING IN WAIT.

THE Tarantula of Taos had not the slightest idea what length of time had elapsed since he climbed up the shaft of the Slip up mine; and, as he afterward decided, must have dropped his pipe, which soon afterward was the cause of the tremendous explosion.

He had been hired to do this very thing by the bandit chief, who was the agent of Lena Reynolds's dastard cousin, and had been paid for the cowardly work; but his prolonged spree with Hank Holbrook had afforded him so much fun—the landlord of the "Nugget" impressing him so favorably—that he decided if there was any chance of crawling out of the agreement he would do so.

After he had seen the bandit chief hanging from the mesquite, and knew that the plans of the latter had failed, he began to feel less apprehensive in regard to his connection with the outlaws.

His nap behind the bar at the "Nugget" had been broken up by Marm Holbrook pouring a bucket of dish-water upon his head. He had traveled continuously the whole of the previous night, and the following night he had been forced to deprive himself of sleep, while waiting for the time to arrive to explode the mine; and, later on, in his escape down the range—during which ride he was so intoxicated that he found it difficult to keep his seat in the saddle—such a thing as rest was not to be thought of.

Consequently he had, when he reached the gorge fallen into a deathlike slumber, which lasted until the middle of the following night, and from which he awakened in a state of mania, in which he was first introduced to the reader.

After a time he recalled the fact that he had appropriated a decanter of whisky at Hank's bar, and he cautiously scouted down to his saddle-bags, giving a wide berth to the hideous phantoms which his disordered imagination saw tearing up the side of the cliff. However, he reached his former position without breaking the decanter; although he bruised himself considerably—a circumstance which, in his terror, he heeded not. Overcome at last, the "Tarantula" sunk upon the rock senseless.

In this manner passed two days, and a part of the third night; half of the whisky being drunk, and the wretched man suffering the agonies of the lost. At length his mind became more natural, as has been related, by him again resorting to the decanter.

He knew well that the fearful sights, which his disordered imaginings had called up, would return to him when the whisky gave out; that again he must suffer almost unendurable torture, and which would undoubtedly cause his death in some horrible form or manner. He therefore

resolved, as we have seen, to revisit Sardine-box City, and procure the liquor, upon which he felt that his life depended. This he would do, at any and all risks.

The "Tarantula," although given to extravagant boasting, was believed to be a coward—indeed, all who knew him thought him too cowardly to be a very bad man; which was, to a certain extent true—he feared to commit murder, or even to thrust his head into the dreaded noose by robbery, except in some round-about manner, and when crazed by whisky, when there was little danger of his complicity in such a crime being discovered.

Always ready, however, was this border bummer, to take advantage of any knowledge that might come to him, through which he might "scoop in wealth."

He now left the gulch, and proceeded up the range, at times raising the now nearly empty decanter upward, between his eyes and the moon, grating his clinched teeth in mingled anger, regret and apprehension; his brutal, scratched, bruised and bloated face contorted, and his huge red nose fearfully swollen, from having come in contact with the rocks.

Ragged, and besmeared with dirt and grease, his eyes filled with insane wildness, he now crushed his dilapidated sombrero upon the back of his head, clasped the bridle-reins in his left hand, and the decanter in his right, and proceeded through the thickets.

Frequently he jerked his horse to a halt, as he fancied some bush or rock moved, or bore a striking resemblance to an Apache brave, or one of the dreaded scouts. These latter, he knew, felt as deep a hatred toward bandits and outlaws generally, as they did for the paint-daubed Indian foe.

Thus the "Tarantula" went on, mile after mile, at times trembling as if in an ague-fit, yet dreading to glue his lips to the mouth of the decanter, lest he should swallow the last drop of the precious liquor that was now his only hope. He well knew that he would need a big drink, just previous to his entrance into Sardine-box City—for this must be done in a stealthy manner to give him self-confidence, and to nerve him for the desperate attempt that he must make to secure him a supply of whisky, sufficient to keep his mind on the borders of a natural condition until he could reach Tucson.

"Dang my cast-iron heart!" he exclaimed suddenly, in a deep, hoarse voice, the unnatural sound of which startled him, and caused him to jerk his horse to a halt, and his "six" from his scabbard, as he gazed into an adjacent thicket.

With weapon thus cocked and pointed, he sat for a full minute, and then broke out into a loud laugh, which was also cut short; for it awakened echoes that appalled him, and caused him to tremble from head to foot.

For a while, this peculiar wanderer of the wilds gazed suspiciously on all sides; he then took a slight sip from the decanter, and broke out in low soliloquy. At first the words came in a hoarse whisper, and were almost inaudible.

"Dang my cast-iron heart, ef I ever afore war in sich a mixed condish! I hain't gut no more vim nor ambish than a fresh borned calf, an' I air about es shaky in ther legs. Dog-gone ef I kin reco'nize my own chin-music! I c'u'd 'a' swore'd that somebuddy else war spokin' thet war 'bout ready ter 'skip over the range' with consumshe, hev'in' only 'bout half o' his breathin' mersheenery left.

"I'm es lonesome es a bad shot Curmanch' left in ther middle o' ther Staked Plains fer ther buzzards an' kiotes ter pick an' chaw at. Ther ding-dong o' my iron heart hev simmered down ter ther quiver o' a dyin' buffler-knat's wing, an' I'm as onstiddy as a bob-tailed hummin'-bird what's tryin' ter take hit's reg'lar whiz. I shell puke up my toe-nails and knee-pans, ef I doesn't take a heffy snifter afore soon!

"Ther Terrantaler o' Taos hev gut down or-mighty low. I gins ter smell Tophet, an' I kin 'most hear ther ole cuss wi' ther horns an' long tail crack his huffs together wi' pure glad, an' chuck in fresh deadwood on ther big blaze whar he 'tends ter roast ther Terrantler ter ther whittled off eend o' all time.

"Cuss me ef this hyer ain't a leetle too bilious! I'm gittin' hit pasted onder me too thick, an' I won't stan' hit. I c'u'dn't clum up ther peaks ter take a see-aster 'bove ther flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, no more'n I c'u'd climb a rainbow an' carve ther Roarer Boary Alice!

"Git, ole hoss, er I'll chaw yer years off! We'll glide a leetle funder 'fore we spills ther 'mainder o' ther whisk'. Dang ef I doesn't ker-ral a nigger an' make him roll a bar'l o' bug-

juice right ahindt me wharever I glides arter this!

"Ther spiders air spinnin' cob-webs inter my throat, an' my in'ards 'pears ter be chuck-full o' alkerlie. I c'u'dn't raise a reg'lar whoop-er-ee nat'ral-like ef I shu'd bu'st my yellin' mersheen a-tryin'. Git, ole hoss! Perceed, slope, glide, skute, levant toward whisk', er yer big boss air a stiff coon!"

And on up the range amid scattered bowlders, cacti and clumps of cedar and mountain pine, the dilapidated "border hero" proceeded, eventually arriving in the vicinity of Sardine-box City. Then he secreted his horse in an "open" surrounded by dense chaparral, removed the bridle, and then, with insane eagerness, drank half of the liquor that remained in the decanter. This gave him great satisfaction and relief, and strengthened him to such an extent that he soon stole, silently and with caution, to the foot of the range, clambering from thence upward, to a point from which he could gain a full view of Sardine-box City. At this time the sun was just rising.

And much the "Tarantula" saw to give him food for thought.

Sardine-box City lay to the north, just below his covert and not two thousand yards from the place at which he had left his horse. On the street were the entire population, mostly collected in front of the Nugget Hotel, and the attention of all seemed to be fastened upon the trail that led from the street down the range toward the south.

Following this trail with wondering eyes, the "Tarantula" discovered Giant George, Arizona Jack and the two Mexican ladies, all riding down the range, and having now nearly reached the spot where he had left his animal. Had he delayed climbing the range ten minutes longer, he would have been discovered by the keen eyes of the giant scout.

A strange, bewildered expression now appeared on the face of the crouching man. This, however, soon disappeared, changing to relief, and even triumph, as he decided, from what Hank Holbrook had already told him, that the scouts were starting for Tucson to escort the two Castilian women to their home. And he mentally put them down for a pair of fools for undertaking such a trip at a time when danger and death lurked in every mile.

After meditating a short time, the look of pleasure and exultation deepened upon the face of the "Tarantula," and he again broke forth in soliloquy:

"Dang my iron heart, ef thar ain't a openin' fer a pilgrim 'bout my size an' cuteness!

"Ef I kin git ther deadwood on enough o' Hank's whisky ter keep me open or shet, jist es I opines ter be, I'll bamboozle some duckets inter my pouch outen ther ole Don Refugio et Tucson.

"I kin go jist a-b'ilin' down-range, scout 'roun' ther camp o' Giant George, then skute fer Tucson, tellin' ther ole Don thet I kin put him on ther trail o' his wife an' darter. I'll make ther ole cuss shove out a heap o' dust afore I guides him; an' then I'll happen outer ther camp whar ther scouts an' weemin bees, p'intin' them out ter the ole Cast-steel-yun, an' claimin' ther rest o' ther wealth what he'll 'gree ter fork over.

"Dang ef thet ain't a payin' p'ogramme, ef I kin make ther riffle! Hit looks bilious es 'gards ther show ter kerral some p'ison, fer ther 'citz' air all wide-open, an' sifted 'roun' ther burg permisc'us-like. Howsomever, I'll run chances, fer death star's me in ther face, an' I'd ruther flop over, an' take my last kick tryin' ter scoop in some bug-juice, then be tortur'd ter death by ther condemned on'arthly double-bar'l'd com-bination meenadgery thet gi'n me a free exhibish' last night et ther gulch, without puttin' up canvas.

"Ef I hed ther 'sand' ter kerral ther hull caboodle, an' ther 'dust' ter shove 'em through ter civerlize, I'd bu'st Barnum ter flinders ther fust season, an' he'd want ter crawl inter a kiote-hole, pull ther durn hole in arter him, an' stay thar, chuck-full o' indig' an' shame, ontill Gabri'l toots his horn.

"By ther bones o' Boone, what's that?"

The "Tarantula" rubbed his eyes vigorously, and then fixed his gaze upon the side of the range, beyond Sardine-box City; his face was stamped with the utmost amazement, not unmixed with apprehension.

He was unable, however, to decide whether the forms that he saw were real, or merely another invoice of the images conjured up by his disordered fancy, like those that had terrified him at the gulch. The "border hero" at once glued the decanter to his lips, and drank

the contents to the last drop. He then threw the useless bottle aside, and upon his hands and knees stared up the range; where, to his utter consternation, he saw that the forms were real, and that they were none other than hideous Apache hags and paint-daubed braves.

"May I be chawed inter hash by a griz' b'ar, ef thar ain't a passel o' greasy, blood-suckin' 'Paches!

"What in thunderation air comin' nex'? Biz air beginnin' ter brighten fer ther Terrantaler, fer I sw'ar nobuddy hev see'd ther red hellyun' 'ceptin' me.

"Ef I doesn't make ther riffle, gettin' whisk on ther sly, I kin raise hit on ther long-b'ared red skunks what's layin' fer chances ter ski, ther heads o' ther 'Sardines,' by playin' scout an' warnin' ther burg. Dog'd ef thar ain't 'dust' in hit!"

The eyes of the "Tarantula" followed the movements of every skulking form, until they had all disappeared in the canyon. Then he was forced to the conclusion that the Indians had given up the design of attacking the town, or laying for loose "citz." This greatly disappointed the border bummer; and stealthily and slowly, taking advantage of every cedar clump, prickly pear patch, and bowlder, he made his way toward a point in the rear of the Nugget Hotel, and near the celebrated bake-oven of Marm Holbrook.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RAID ON THE "NUGGET."

ENSCONCED within a small clump of cedars, the "Tarantula of Taos" gazed into the street; having a view of that portion of it between the Nugget Hotel and the next shanty to the north of it.

He had been fully an hour in making his winding way, by wide detour, from his position on the mountain side, from which he had discovered the departure of the scouts and the two Castilian ladies, as well as getting a view of the skulking Apaches; and he was now hankering for more stimulants, and seeing no opening for him to sneak into the bar, was merging into a desperate state of mind.

Soon after secreting himself in the cedars, however, the "Tarantula" was forced to admit to himself that he was the most fortunate man in Arizona; for two of the "citz" advanced from the "Nugget" toward his covert, filling him with abject terror, for he knew if he was discovered he would be in a very dangerous position.

The "citz" would decide that he was one of the bandits, who had escaped their vengeance; and Marm Holbrook—whom he believed to have seen him, and to have thrown the water on him when he was asleep behind the bar—and Hank, too, would reveal the fact that he had been at the "Nugget" on the day and evening previous to the fight, and the blowing up of the mine.

As he was a stranger, if he gave a truthful account of himself, it would be the means of condemning him to the rope, while a false one would probably be known to be false, and would also lead the infuriated "citz" to elevate him up a limb—all this, considered in an instant, caused the miserable wretch to tremble like an aspen leaf, and the sweat of terror to stand in great beads upon his forehead.

But his fears vanished as quickly as they had flashed upon him; for the two miners turned to a clump of bushes, a couple of yards to his left, and secreted a bottle, which the eager watcher felt assured contained the sole remedy for his most intense sufferings and prostration; for he distinctly heard the gurgling sound of the liquor in the neck of the bottle.

But the "Tarantula" heard more than that. He heard words that gave him great relief and joy, and that removed a heavy load from his mind.

"Ya-as," spoke one of the miners, "I hes 'zamed ther outcrop, an' hit's ther richest 'lead' I hes see'd on this, or any other range. Hit war ornighy lucky ther bag-slashers blowed up ther mine; fer ther boyees w'u'dn't 'a' struck ther lower 'lead' in a month o' Sun-days.

"Cos why? Hit war ter one side, plum' under ther range! I'm bettin' ther cuss what touched her off, gut blowed inter cat-fish bait. I hain't gut over my jamboree till yit; an' we'll hev hit heavy arter ther weemin glides up ter Gold Gulch in ther hearse.

"Tom Jones air goin' ter manerfactur' some jimjam side-shows fer Hank, thet'll make a heap o' fun; though Hank, I reckon, hes gut enough hellish sights inter his brain-box ter run him wild without any extras. He's drunker

now nor any blue-coat ther night arter pay-day. I gut a bottle ter "cache" afore he gits too cranky ter shove p'ison on ther stren'th o' a chalk-mark. We-uns air all ter meet et Pilgrim's Palace, soon es ther hearse glides up ther rise.

"Come on, Jim, er we mought lose a raffle o' fun."

The "Tarantula" was dumfounded by this avalanche of good luck, that had so unexpectedly been hurled upon him, when he so much stood in need of it.

He could hardly believe his senses, but the words of the miners were so plain and unmistakable, that the border wanderer was forced to credit them, and his joy and astonishment were beyond comprehension or description.

It was evident that he was not suspected of having blown up the mine; in fact he doubted if either Marm Holbrook or Hank had mentioned his being in the burg.

Again, the "blow-up" had proved a most fortunate thing for the "citz" and the "Angel," for as he now understood it, a rich "lead" had been disclosed by the explosion, and this he resolved to profit by, in some way, in the future.

In the next place, Hank was drunk, and this left an opening to secure a supply of whisky. The "citz" too, were about to congregate at Pilgrim's Palace, and would not be in his way in the least.

Lastly, Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds were to leave on the stage. Indeed, "all hands and the cook" seemed suddenly to have been influenced in some mysterious manner to play right into his hand; while near him lay a bottle of bug-juice, providentially brought out for his special use, to clear his brain and brace him up for carrying out his programme successfully.

While thus bewildered by his startling and unlooked-for good fortune, another event favored the Tarantula.

This was the rattling up of the stage to the Nugget, which drew the attention of the "citz;" and now, worming his way, flat upon the ground, he gained the clump of bushes, clutched the bottle with insane eagerness, pulled out the cork with his teeth and thrust the neck into his mouth.

The gurgle of the fiery liquor sounded for some time; then came the loud smack of the lips of the border bummer, and his eyes flashed with satisfaction as he replaced the cork and returned to his former covert in the same stealthy manner, his expression totally unlike what it had been only a short time previously.

"Dang'd ef I doesn't git ther ding-dong back inter my iron heart an' run ther hull range!" muttered the Tarantula, in a low voice, as he jammed his hat on the back of his head, thrusting the brim upward and assuming a look and manner that indicated the most devil-may-care state of mind that was conceivable.

He was getting back to his normal condition, and for the time had forgotten his recently formed plans in regard to the scouts and bamboozling Don Refugio, as well as the presence of the Apaches so near the town.

He had not long to wait before he saw Marm Holbrook hurl her bundles into the coach and crawl in through the window after them, which caused the Tarantula to cram his sombrero into his huge mouth to smother his laughter, while he tore up the leaves and grass spasmodically in his mirth.

But the appearance of Lena Reynolds changed the emotions of the watcher, his eyes being now fixed upon her slender and graceful form, and her pale, yet beautiful face.

Deeply impressed though he was, his wits were now keen, his mind clear, and he reasoned that Hank was in the doorway watching the embarkation of those so closely connected with him. Now was the Tarantula's time to act.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, he crawled to a point which enabled him to proceed toward the rear of the Nugget without being discovered by any one.

Then, as a barrel stood on the far side of the kitchen door, and toward the street, he crawled around the corner of the building and thence to the back entrance, keeping the barrel between him and the street. Then, with a grunt and a sigh of relief, he arose to his feet, standing erect for the first time since he dismounted from his horse some hours previous.

A perfect cyclone of good luck seemed to have burst upon him, continuing without cessation; but he felt that it could not last, and that, when the tide did turn, bad luck would be hurled upon him in the same ratio.

His recent fearful experiences and sufferings were fresh in his mind and led him to this gloomy conclusion.

Hastily but carefully he stepped to the entrance of the bar-room, the same being partly open, and peeped into the bug-juice department of the Nugget, the smell of the liquors being more agreeable to his nostrils than the fragrance of the sweetest flowers.

Hank was now standing in the front doorway, and the hiss and crack of the whip of the stage-driver at that moment struck the ears of the Tarantula and warned him that he had no time to lose. He therefore sunk to the floor as the coach rattled up the street, crawling over it and behind the bar as Hank called out, "Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

The Tarantula now realized that his luck had indeed changed, that he had been a little too late, it not having occurred to him that Hank, being on a tear, would return to the bar as soon as the coach had dashed up the street, for he would then be relieved from the presence of the women and would be eager to make up for lost time by indulging in a lone drink.

And the bummer was right; for he heard Hank turn about, in a slow and unsteady manner. Quickly he crawled under the bar at the further end; but he was forced to double up considerably, drawing up his knees to his chin, to hide himself. Fortunately for him, however, it was quite dark, as there was no way for the daylight to enter the bar except by the door.

Though he felt himself safe from immediate discovery, the "Tarantula" was in no enviable frame of mind; for, as his luck had apparently changed, he feared now, that the "citz" would crowd in for a prolonged debauch, in which event he must be discovered, for he could not long maintain such a cramped position. And discovery, under such suspicious circumstances would place him in a position of great danger, especially if Hank should make known the fact that he had been at the "Nugget" on the day previous to the attack made by the bandits.

Had he not swallowed such a large quantity of whisky, the border bummer would have shaken with apprehension, as if in an ague-fit.

Hank, supporting himself by the bar slab, dragged his feet along the floor, and around behind the bar, where he braced himself for a moment. He then succeeded in securing a decanter from the shelf. This he placed on the bar, with a glass; and then, leaning upon his elbows, he poured out a generous drink.

There seemed to be none of the "citz" any longer in the vicinity; and the lurker, becoming desperate at the bare thought of the consequences of his being discovered, resolved upon immediate action.

Without making the slightest noise, he crawled at once from his hiding-place, clutched a leg of Hank in each hand, and with a strength born of desperation hurled the landlord over the bar; Hank striking the floor with such force as to shake the building, and being rendered speechless by the fall.

Then closing and barring the door, without wasting a moment of time, the "Tarantula" proceeded to business, arguing that the "citz," who knew that Hank was drunk, would suppose him to have locked up, and gone to bed.

The bummer was now master of the situation, being in possession of the "Nugget Hotel," and unlimited whisky at his command. But he was in total darkness.

However, a flint and steel soon remedied this; and, lighting a candle, he placed the same upon the bar, and then, with the air of a conqueror, he grasped the glass of liquor that poor Hank had poured out, and drank it with great satisfaction, giving a sly wink, as he did so, at the senseless landlord. He then returned the tumbler to the bar, and exclaimed in guarded tones:

"Dang'd ef ther ding-dong hain't gut back inter my iron heart! I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' never lost a leg. I ginerly knocks the last flicker outen any human what stan's atween me an' whisk', when I'm rearin', tearin' dry. This air a new deal, an' I holds ther bestest keerd in ther deck. Hank, ole man, I hated most all-fired ter give yer a extry flip-flop, but I c'n'dn't count on yer. Yertongue wabbles too much, an' yer mought get yer old iron-hearted pard's neck inter a lasso noose."

"I'm hyer arter bug-juice, which I hed ter hev or bu'st up Arezone from A to Z a-tryin' ter git hit. I must levant now, an' nobuddy'll know I've bin hyer; fer ye're too drunk ter undercomstan' what bucked ag'in' yer, an' ther boyees'll sw'ar yer locked ther door, an' then went ter sleep, an' fell down offen ther bar."

"I takes a John-demmy this trip, ter hev a dead sure thing on not gittin' short o' whisk', an' gittin' mixed in with ther devil's me-

nadgery. I reckon yer hes some duckets, but I ain't givin' myself away, by confiscatin' 'em. Yer won't miss a John-demmy, thar's sich a hefty supply on 'em. So long, Hank!"

"The Terrantaler o' Taos, what see-estars on ther tip-top peak, 'bove the flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, 'll see yer later. A-jew, old pard! Pleasant dreams!"

As he thus spoke, the border-bummer, having secured a gallon demijohn full of whisky, replaced the candle where he had found it in the kitchen. He then unlocked the back door and peered forth.

Not a human being was within sight, and he passed at once around to the rear of the building and thence to the thicket, where he secured the bottle belonging to the miners and thrust it into his pocket. Then, as cautiously as had been his advance to the town, he retreated.

In another half-hour he was in the thicket where he had left his horse; but he had not been long in his covert when the tramp of ridden steeds struck his ears and he quivered with terror as a horde of paint-daubed Apache braves and squaws passed quite near him, their faces contorted with a thirst for blood and revenge, their black, snake-like eyes darting piercing glances at every clump of bushes or cluster of boulders, and seeming to the horrified "border hero" to pierce through the foliage and into his very soul.

No mortal ever felt more relieved than did the "Tarantula" when the red pirates of the prairie and mountains disappeared from his view down the range.

CHAPTER IX.

AMONG THE "CITZ."

THE Gold Gulch stage, within which were Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds, the mother and the "Angel" of Sardine-box City—more loved and revered than gold or life—disappeared over the spur of the range northward, kerchiefs waving from the windows to the last, the sombreros of the "citz" being whirled in the air in all directions; the good-wishes and good-byes being yelled frantically on all sides.

No sooner, however, had the "hearse" vanished from view, than all regained their head-gear, knocking the hats against their legs to free the same from dust, and then the "citz" collected around Tom Jones, their worthy sheriff. The latter now found himself the most important personage in the burg for the first time in some days, and he immediately assumed the domineering manner and self-important pride that, in his way of thinking, belonged to his office, but which he never displayed when Giant George was in the burg.

"O-o-o-h, yes! O-o-o-h, yes! O-o-o-o-h, yes!" he yelled, in imitation, of a court-crier.

"I, Tom Jones, Sheriff o' Sardine-box, orders a gatherin' o' all ther Sardines interested in ther good o' this hyer burg et Pilgrim's Palace, righterway. Meetin' 'll open in 'bout ten mule-squeals on important biz."

A chorus of cheers rung through the street, and all followed the sheriff into Pilgrim's Palace, which was situated alone and to the north of the Nugget Hotel, among the opposite row of shanties.

Passing the screen before the door, they all ranged themselves in the bar-room, the counter being at the right, and a number of card-tables beyond in the rear of the building.

The time had been when Hank Holbrook had the greater part of the custom of the "citz," for he had been the first to "open up" in the whisky business—in fact, he was one of the original settlers. But of late he had lost custom on account of his being so constantly under the influence of his own merchandise, a circumstance regretted by all except the proprietor of Pilgrim's Palace, and a smaller bar further up.

Tom Jones thought the world of Hank, and knew him like a book. But hold! that adage does not apply, for Tom knew him, as the reader may have surmised, far better than any book, as the Sheriff of Sardine-box City could not read.

All the previous night a grand and general jamboree had been in progress, in celebration of the recovery of the Angel from the bandits, the cleaning out of the road-agents, and the exposure of a new and rich lead, by the blowing up of the Slip-up mine in an attempt by the outlaws to destroy the quartz-mills and furnaces—the gift of Lena Reynolds to the citizens.

During this celebration Tom had noticed, especially as the morning dawned upon them, that Hank was beginning to look strange; that he had drank deep and would, if he continued

through the day, doubtless be wild with mania the coming night. In other words, the landlord would have another attack of jim-jams, which might end his days, as he came near going over the range in two previous attacks of the same.

This had and did worry Tom Jones greatly; and as all pleadings and reasonings had been unnoticed by Hank, the sheriff bethought himself of a plan which, he reasoned, would not only prevent the little man from further excessive drinking but would be a warning to him to cease his extravagant indulgence in liquor for all time to come.

The landlord of the Nugget was a liberal, whole-souled pilgrim, and respected by all. The fact that Marm Holbrook, his wife, was greatly pestered and worried by her husband's terrible sprees gave the "citz" no little sorrow, for they were all greatly attached to her as the mother of the burg. This decided all the miners in the conviction that something must be done at once.

All this had been freely discussed since the previous evening, and Tom had called this meeting to decide what was best to be done to save Hank's life; for that was just what it amounted to, as all were confident that the little landlord could not live through another attack of delirium tremens.

Upon reaching the far end of the counter in the Pilgrim's Palace, Tom raised his hand and cried out:

"Come up, boyees, an' nomernate yer liquid 'freshments. Hit's my set 'em up; an' then we'll call order back hyer, fer keerd-flippin' ain't rushin' biz jist 'bout now. I reckon we-uns'll hev dust enough afore another moon ter plank down on pasteboards, or order up errigates every ten minutes, ef we feel disposed thet-away. Fer ther Slip-up, er I sh'd say the Blow-up, air goin' ter pan out way up.

"Dang hit! I allers slip up on ther cog o' thet mine. We-uns changed hit ter ther Angel, but hit wouldn't stick. 'Cos why? Hit war too purty a name ter fasten onto a hole in ther groun'; but Blow-up air ormighty 'properit, an' so much like ther ole handle thet I opine our talkers'll git used ter hit."

Tumblers for the crowd were now placed upon the bar, and several bottles, while as many of the "citz" as could manage it ranged themselves along the counter, pouring out their liquor. Then with their glasses in hand, they stepped back to make room for others.

Tom Jones held his glass up between his eyes and the light, and then called out:

"Boyees, hyer's ter ther nicest, purtiest, neatest, bestest, most slam-up, A1, XXX, superfine, double-distilled, b'iled-down female 'oman thet ever stompeded Arizona dirt! Hyer's ter ther kaliker-kivered human what shot like a comet inter Sardine-box City, softened our rough natur's an' flint hearts, gi'n us grub when we war hungry, an' kind words when we war bilious, turnin' ther very bowlders inter yaller gold!

"Hyers to her, ther Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range; hopin' thet cyclones'll skute funder toward sunset, an' nothin' 'ceptin' zephyr breezes fan her allerbaster brow. Whoop! Down wi' yer 'pison!"

Although all were extremely thirsty, and eager to "tip tumblers," they forgot their craving, and every word of the long toast of the sheriff seemed to them to be dove-tailed into the exact and proper place, finding an echo in their hearts; while the effort of Tom, so unexpected and so appropriate, astonished them, and created a new admiration and respect for the speaker. When he ended a wild cheer burst from every throat, cowhide boots were raised and stamped hard upon the floor, while hard and horny hands slammed upon the bar-slab, causing the frail building to tremble, and the bottles to bounce upon the shelves. Then all drank their liquor quickly, as if an instant's delay would show a want of respect for her who had been the subject of the toast.

Tom Jones wasted no time, for he was now running the burg, and knew that much was to be accomplished before the return of Giant George, Arizona Jack, and the "Angel." He was desirous of proving to them that he had executive ability, which, in the past, it had never been in his power to demonstrate.

The sheriff's ambition was to surprise his friends on their return, and gratifying himself at the same time, by proving to the "citz" that he was competent to maintain order, and to run the burg in his official capacity in the time to come, when Sardine-box City would be a surprising success—a city, indeed, increased in population, prosperity and pride, through the

most singularly discovered bonanza at the "Slip-up," now the "Blow-up" mine.

Striding to the rear of the long room, Tom sprung upon a card-table, and the "citz" gathered in front of him, open-mouthed and expectant, yet puzzled in regard to the nature of the business before the meeting.

However, they were not left long in suspense; for Tom burst out immediately, evidently, as on the former occasion, having a most heartfelt interest in the person of whom he spoke.

"Feller-citz, this ain't no time for extry no-'count chin-music; an' I'm dealin' ter-day in pure, solid an' plain 'Nited States. We-uns hes a heap ter do at ther mine, an' ther burg must look fresh an' neat when ther 'Angel' roves back. Ter-day air a off-day, I knows, but I hes 'ranged a p'ogramme thet I reckons yer'll help me ter kerry out.

"Marm Holbrook, ther mother o' this hyer burg, one o' ther bestest kaliker-kivered humans that ever flopped a flap-jack or nussed a sick dust-hunter, she hev gone wi' ther 'Angel' ter Gold Gulch; an' she hes levanted so ormighty bilious and worried 'bout Hank, thet she didn't know 'nough ter git inter ther hearse by ther door. I swan she jist clumb up an' squirmed in through ther winder, es yer all knows.

"Ther 'Angel' war ormighty blue es 'gards Hank too, an' I doesn't know o' nothin' what 'd make 'em feel more fuller o' glad then ter find Hank slam-up, right side up wi' care, standin' in ther Nugget door ter welcome 'em, plum sober, an' with a smile on his face like sunshine on a barn-door.

"Now, I knows thet ef we-uns doesn't play ther game I'm thinkin' on, thet he'll either be stiff, an' ready ter nail up 'tween four slabs an' plant, or else dead-gone with jim-jams, an' so cussed full o' lunification thet we-uns'll hev ter lariat him ter a tree, or he'll stompede roun' ther range, an' mebbe-so jump down inter ther canyon.

"He'll be crazier than a alligator-gar with its tail cut off, I air ormighty sure, ef we-uns 'lows him ter keep pourin' down 'pison. He's checked fer Tophet, on ther cyclone express, ef we-uns don't chip in 'fore his game's over. Hank's purty wild now, an' he knows he's goin' ter hev a show ter study nat'ral an' onnat'ral hist'ry by 'lustrations; thet all ther meenaderies in ther world air goin' ter consolerdate an' jine ter-gether fer his 'speshul benefit, givin' him a free exhibish', 'fore feedin' ther animiles, what'll show a hefty hankerin' ter chaw on his 'nater-my.

"He knows hit's comin', an' thet air a p'int in favor o' my p'gramme. He ain't got ter ther jump-off yet, but he's glidin' fast that-away, and ther only show ter save his bacon an' drag him through air ter git in ahead on 'em, an' run a oppersition jim-jam.

"Howsomever, I don't reckon yer undercomstan's my p'ogramme, so I'll 'splain.

"I shot a black wolf t'other day, skun ther critter an' stuffed ther hide sorter nat'ral like, puttin' in a pair o' glass marbles fer peepers. Yer knows Hank hed a orful time wi' a black wolf onc't before, when we laid him out dead drunk on ther bowlder, under ther two cusses, Black Ben an' Sport, what we'd strung up.

"An' thet ain't all by a dog-gone sight, fer I've gut a hefty 'mount o' snakes, which I 'tends ter tie strings to an' drag 'em 'crost ther floor, mebbe so drappin' some through knot-holes from up chamber.

"We'll run in jim-jams on Hank ahead o' time an' skeer him so dang'd bad thet he'll break off short, though we'll hev ter gi'n him some in a taperin' way. Thet's my p'ogramme, feller-citz, an' hit must be kerried through ter-night, er Hank's a goner sure.

"Now, all git ter biz et ther Nugget ter-night, er pore Hank 'll go over ther range.

"Come, we'll errigate ag'in an' then snooze!"

In ten minutes after this arrangement had been made the "citz" were all fast asleep.

CHAPTER X.

CALCULATING CHANCES.

GRASPING the bottle from his pocket, as the Apaches disappeared, the "Tarantula" drank a goodly portion of the contents, congratulating himself that good luck still hovered in his near vicinity. He then jerked a pone of corn-bread and a chunk of bacon that he had thrust in his pocket while in Marm Holbrook's kitchen and began devouring it like a ravenous beast, it being the first food that he had eaten in four days, a fact which, in itself, had tended not a little toward demoralizing his mind and torturing him with visions of the most horrible description.

He had now, however, an abundance of the antidote for all the ills of mind and body from which he had suffered, and he felt a relief and happiness which were, in comparison with the near past, most

agreeable and exhilarating. His mind gradually drifted back to the means employed to procure this stimulant, which he felt would be the means of preserving his life, for he well knew that he could not pass another such night as the previous one without taking a drink at intervals.

In such an emergency the "Tarantula" perceived that he would die a most horrible death, and alone at that, there, in the wilds, to be torn by wolves and buzzards, his bones uncared for, and unknown. This train of thought led him to think of poor Hank Holbrook, and, although the "Tarantula's" frequent boast was that his heart was "cast iron," pity, regret and sorrow filled it now as the senseless form of the landlord of the "Nugget" was pictured before his imagination.

During his drinking bout with Hank, to which reference has been made, the border bummer had been much impressed by the genial, free-hearted landlord, who had awakened in him feelings that had long been dormant, creating thoughts that were new, and strange, and agreeable, for the "Tarantula" had long been a lone wanderer from one camp to the other, and generally shunned by all whom he met. By some because they believed his loud boastings and feared him; by others because they felt that it was all assumed, was the merest bravado and that he was destitute of "sand" or courage.

Hank had believed every word that he had said, and yet Hank had not feared him. He had treated him like a gentleman, and this, strange to say, worried the "Tarantula," now that he thought upon the subject, and how badly he had treated him in return.

And, from the fact that Hank drank to excess, suffering as he had suffered, this also caused the big border bully to have sympathy for the landlord, and to lean friendly toward him. Gradually, too, his thoughts reverted to the Castilian ladies and their escort, all of whom, he now felt positive, were doomed to a horrible death by torture; for he reasoned that the Apaches had seen them depart from Sardine-box City, and were now on their trail.

George and Jack were friends of Hank, as were also the ladies, and the "Tarantula" felt sure that though the former detected him, and indeed had warned him from more than one mining town and camp, yet the noted "square and white" scout would, to a certain extent, be his friend, should he warn them of the presence on their trail of the infuriated Apaches, the squaws of the slain warriors and the few survivors of El Orso's war-party.

Now and then, as time passed, the "Tarantula" indulged in whisky, gradually merging into a state of fearlessness and reckless daring, which would be termed by some "Dutch courage," as it was the off-spring of frequent potations.

But the cause of the state in which the border bummer found himself mattered not, it being sufficient and praiseworthy that he had formed a resolution to warn the whites, and not only that, but to stay by them and assist them in repelling the attack of the Indians.

Having formed this resolve, the "Tarantula" suddenly bethought himself of the fact that it would be impossible for him to pass down the range, in order to get between the Apaches and the whites, unless by making a wide *detour*, or in some way reaching the pass through the range, which Giant George had undoubtedly pointed for, and where he would encamp the coming night.

The "Tarantula" knew every trail within the boundaries of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado quite as well as did Giant George, and he was also posted in the manners and customs of the Indian tribes, being, in addition, well acquainted with every detail of border life. The secrets of trailing and "covering" a trail, or avoiding the leaving of "sign," had been a necessity to him for years in his vagabond pilgrimage in quest of "soft scraps," the "ducats" of the "fresh" or "tenderfoot," whom he could "bamboozle" into purchasing "salted" claims, or claims, the glittering outcroppings of which contained not a fraction of the precious metal.

This knowledge of the country and of Indian character was now brought to the front, he reasoning, and with good ground, that the Apaches would "lay low," secreting themselves during the day, and the coming night dash down like the wind on the range, on amid the foot-hills on the west side, until near a point where their reasonings would cause them to conclude that the whites would encamp. This done, they would proceed with the utmost caution, pouncing upon their prey in the early morning hours, when the sleep of man is the deepest, most deathlike.

This having been well pondered upon, the "Tarantula" of Taos decided that he must delay no longer, or he would be "scooped in" on his way down the range by the Apaches. He was positive that if he struck out east into the open plain, and proceeded thence south, the Indians, if they discovered him, as they doubtless would do, would not jeopardize themselves by a chase after him, thus running the risk of being themselves discovered by some of the "citz" of Sardine-box City.

His programme having been thus settled, he proceeded at once to carry out his plans; his horse having had a long rest at the gulch, and also good feed, and being now fresh, and equal to hard service for some time to come.

The animal was bridled quickly, the lariat coiled and attached to the saddle-horn, and then the "Tarantula" mounted, with surprising activity, clasping the demijohn in one arm as affectionately as a mother would a babe; the contents of the bottle having, to the vision of the wanderer, tinted the rough range and arid plain, the cacti, cedars, and bowlders with *couleur du rose*, and transformed him

from a terrified, weak and trembling wretch, to a regular "come and buck ag'in me" desperado, with a strong "hankerin' for bleed," providing he had a show to "scoop things without losin' ha'r."

But, as he was about to urge his horse in the direction of the plain, an idea seemed to strike him, which changed his plan, and caused his face to contort into a most comical expression, while his lips drew up together from all points; forming a puckered-up circle, from which issued a low, peculiar whistle. Then his tall, gaunt frame shook with suppressed laughter, and a cunning leer came into his bloodshot eyes. He sprung from his saddle to the ground, returned his horse to the thicket, then stalked to a patch of prickly-pear within the densest portion of which he secreted the demijohn, as if he feared it might take wings and fly away. Returning to it, with a happy second thought, he indulged in one more long drink, at which he felt greatly relieved; for he had not until then sampled its contents, and for aught he knew it might contain "some sich slush es wine, without vim enough in it ter make a cotton-tailed rabbit gi'n a extry jump."

He feared also that some one might pass near, and hearing his horse, proceed to examine the "sign," and thus discover what was more precious to him than gold or diamonds. But, leave it he must. However, he again proceeded toward the range, at the foot of which he placed his treasure in a more secure hiding-place. He then clambered up the mountain-side, which at this point was almost covered with cedars, loose boulders, crevasses, and gaping rents.

For a mile, the "Tarantula" proceeded cautiously, keeping himself screened from below, to a point where he knew there was a rough walled gorge. This, he believed, the Apaches would select as their hiding-place during the day.

As the mouth of this gorge was reached, the face of the "Tarantula" lighted up with satisfaction; for, far below his position, was the savage horde, now engaged in devouring the carcass of a horse which they had killed. Their mustangs were staked in the bed of the gorge, near its head; while fully two-score of Indians, hideous, half-naked squaws, with six paint-daubed braves, were tearing the blood-dripping meat like half-starved wolves—a hellish scene, and one which the "Tarantula" resolved to slightly change.

It had occurred to him, when about to start away, that the Indians would have a sentinel in the foothills to watch the plains; and he was anxious to reach Giant George and his party without the knowledge of the Apaches. With this view, he decided to create an excitement in their camp that would fill them with anxious apprehension, letting them know that they had been discovered; and, at the same time, draw the sentinel from his post through the alarm he intended to create.

Not only this, but he intended to rid the earth of some of their number. The Indians were, many of them, collected near the base of the towering and almost perpendicular wall of the gulch, on the same side that he was; while to his right, inward, and toward the heart of the range, and all along upon narrow shelves, were strewn huge rocks and boulders that had been rent from above by the lightning during terrific storms. Here was his opportunity.

On his way to this point the giant borderer had kept his eyes open for an object, aside from watching for indications of the Indians, and had secured a strong bar of cedar, which, riven from its stump by storms far up the mountain side, had fallen from shelf to shelf, breaking off the limbs as it went, and was now strong and serviceable for use as a lever.

Only for a moment did the "Tarantula" view the scene below and make his calculations as to the position of certain huge rocks which, if hurled down, would crush and maim such of the red hags and braves as it would come in contact with.

These were at points where it was impossible for the Indians to observe him, either before or after his proposed plan of warfare.

He soon gained the position he most desired. There he selected two boulders, beneath the inner side of which he could thrust his lever.

Quickly the "Tarantula" peered through the foliage of the trees, as by a herculean effort he sent the first of the rocks thundering down the side of the gulch. On it went, bounding and whirling from shelf to shelf, crushing pines and cedars as if they were but waving grass. Then he saw the terrified Apaches spring from their crouching attitudes on the ground and, bewildered and demoralized, rush in a horrified mob from the base of the gulch toward the opposite side, knocking each other down in their mad flight.

But all in vain. The huge rock shot downward with electric velocity, and whirled over the bed of the gulch, crushing two of the squaws beneath its merciless adamant sides, and maiming, or badly bruising, three others.

Only for a moment did the "Tarantula" gaze, then he sprung some feet from where he stood to another huge rock, and while the gulch rung with yells of agony and howls for the dead, another rock went crashing lightning-like down the gulch side, striking sparks of fire as it ground against the iron-permeated granite; but doing no injury this time to the forewarned Apaches.

Without an instant's delay the "Tarantula" returned to his demijohn and horse and taking a hearty drink, patted himself on the head encouragingly, as he said:

"Good boyee, Terrant! Ye're a brick—a regular pressed brick. Le's take somethin'!"

Again the giant borderer treated himself to an "errigate," and then springing into his saddle as before, he urged his horse from the foot-hills to the open plain and then southward toward the pass,

satisfied that the snake-like eyes of the Apache sentinel were not fixed upon him.

He clasped the "john-demmy" lovingly, as before, giving his beast the spur, the animal, with its long neck outstretched, flying over the prairie like the wind, in a far-reaching gallop, while the rider yelled in his characteristic boasting manner:

"Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm ther Boss o' ther Bowlders! I'm ther 'Pache-smasher o' Arizona! I'm chuck-full o' p'ison, an' on ther war-path. Ker-whoop! E-e-e-ho! Gaze et my be-yutiful pictur', an' run yer peepers down ther hull len'th o' my nat-ermy."

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' never lost a leg! Jist listen ter ther ding-dong o' my iron heart. I runs ther 'Migrate Serloon fer my own pertickler 'commerdashe. I doesn't keep no chalk, and I doesn't keer fer duckets."

"I'm a free an' airy frontier terror, an' a border hero, fu'st class! I see-estars on ther tip-top peaks, 'bove ther flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, an' yer kin hear ther ding-dong o' my bestest bleed mersheen from ther foot-hills without strainin' yer years ter listen."

"I kin turn a cyclone inter a balmy zephyr, by whistlin' ag'in' hit; an' my breath air p'ison. When I lays myself out ter errigate at a water-hole er a river, ther catfish goes flip-flop ter one't, fer I leaves them high an' dry."

"I skins 'Pache's heads, an' starts stiff-yards by contract. I'm a bad citizen. I'm a 'notcher,' (one who takes human life, for the sole object of gaining reputation as a desperado), a 'rustler,' (one who steals cattle and horses on the American side of the Rio Grande, runs them into Mexico, sells them, and then loads himself with Mexican plunder on the return trip), an' when I gits low in duckets I runs with 'dinglers,' (stage-robbers, or road-agents)."

"I'm a roarin' rager on honest biz, on ther war-path, an' b'ilin' over wi' whisk' an' pure prussic acid hyderphobic indig'!"

"Whoop-er-e-e-e! Ker-whoop! Stan' from under, 'Paches, when you smells my breathe! Whoop-er-up! Ker-whoop!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SHERIFF'S PRESCRIPTION.

AN idea of the proposed proceedings in regard to giving poor Hank a free exhibition of horrible scenes, with the hope thereby of preventing the thirsty landlord of the "Nugget" from further reckless indulgence in intoxicants, to the extent of plunging him into the terrible condition of mania, which had on previous occasions caused much trouble and tribulation, besides bringing him to death's door, was now fully understood and indorsed by the "citz."

The measure proposed might be a severe one, nevertheless, it seemed the only way open to save poor Hank from excruciating agony, and perhaps death.

A committee of arrangements was chosen by Tom Jones, who, as a matter of course, appointed himself chairman of said committee; and after a general "errigate," or "eye-opener," all, as has been mentioned, having indulged in a day nap, proceeded, with Tom at their head, down the street toward the "Nugget," the sheriff remarking:

"Yer see, boyees, ther thing, hev gut ter be did; fer this hyer burg c'u'dn't be run wo'th shucks without Hank an' Marm Holbrook. Hit wouldn't be nat'ral 'tall hyer without 'em. Ef Hank sh'u'd git on another heity cyclone jamboree, an' git jim-jams, jumpin' inter ther canyon, er skutin' 'over ther rango' some sich onnat'ral way, Marm Holbrook 'u'd go b'ilin' roun' plum' lunified. She'd be one o' ther most howlin'est, wildest widders yer ever see'd; though she does sling prussic acid lingo at him so dang'd often."

"Hit 'u'd purty soon bu'st up ther 'Nugget,' our ole stan'-by, an' she'd skute Texas-way, es she's allers threatenin'. Ef she sh'u'd, I'm opinin' thet ther 'Angel' would levant with her; fer I've hearn Marm Holbrook givin' her a heap o' treacle talk 'bout Texas, sayin' she'd git well an' strong, down Antone-way."

"Sides thet, she's urg'in' Giant George ter git a persish t'other side ther Staked Plains, es Gov'ment scout ag'in' ther cussed Curmanches."

"This air serious biz, when yer comes to walk 'roun' hit, an' 'zamine ther p'int's clean through. Of course they c'u'dn't take ther 'Blow-up' long wi' them; but I swar I ain't sich a ornighy mean human es ter sot my whole mind on pannin' dust, or scratchin' gravel arter 'pockets.' I wants some fun sandwiched wi' mine; an' hit's more'n half o' life ter hev a show ter 'sociate wi' folkses what yer knows air simon-pure solid an' 'suar' humans, what hes bin through hellishness wi' yer, an' yer knows they'll do ter tie to."

"Thet's my opine, gi'n right out on the open prairer, er on ther peaks. I asserwates we-'uns can't glide 'long smooth ef we loses Hank; an' we'll be all broke up ef Marm Holbrook skins out, an' ther 'Angel' glides along wi' her. Thet'll tar Giant George away from Arezone, dead sure an' sartain."

"Hank's gut ter be saved, ef we-'uns hes ter tie him on a mustang, stompede ther anermile an' shake ther 'fects o' whisk' outen ther good-natur'd leetle cuss."

"Hold on, boyees! Dang'd ef I ain't afraid we-'uns air too late. Thar's somethin' wrong, fer ther 'Nugget' air shet up tight es a sprung b'ar-trap. Glide easy, an' we'll 'vestergate things. I'm es narvous es a ele maid on her fust trip inter a menadgery."

As the words of the sheriff implied, he and his followers had reached the "Nugget," when he perceived that the hotel was closed as the reader knows, this was the work of the "Tarantula of Taos."

All the "citz," who were not chosen to accompany and assist Tom, were advised to "lay low" up town; as they might interfere with the proposed arrangements.

It was now sunset; a blood-red sun-burst darting up westward, blending with the blue sky, while the full round moon promised a pleasant night, as she rolled on her course upward from the Orient.

With panther-like steps, the committee approached the "Nugget," all listening intently; but no sound reached their ears.

Tom tried the front door with great caution, but it was barred; and all proceeded to the rear. A loneliness, very impressive to the "citz," prevailed in and about Marm Holbrook's head-quarters—the kitchen of the "Nugget."

The voice of the landlady was no longer heard, nor the clatter of pots and pans; and Tom's face, as well as the countenances of his companions, were stamped with apprehension and the gloomiest regret, for none believed that they could gain entrance.

Much to the sheriff's joy and relief, however, the outer rear door opened as he raised the latch; and he stepped upon the threshold, glancing quickly toward the door that opened into the bar. But all was darkness, and he could not see whether the bar was opened or closed.

At the same instant, Tom raised his hand, and gazed at his coadjutors in a cautioning manner, while he bent his head forward in a listening attitude. A moment thus, and then the faces of all showed the relief they felt; and Tom slapped his hand over his mouth to suppress a laugh.

Whispering some directions to his companions, who at once started to comply with them, the sheriff now entered the kitchen, struck a match, and lighted a candle; the same that "Tarantula" had made use of. Then he advanced cautiously to the door, and opened it into the bar; satisfied, from the sounds, that Hank was in a sleep so deep that he would not be easily awakened.

Tom was not in the least surprised to find the landlord stretched upon the floor, and his face covered with blood, from a severe bruise upon the forehead. The glass and decanter upon the slab indicated that Hank had been indulging in his favorite beverage, and falling suddenly, the loss of blood had somewhat relieved the pressure upon his brain, and thus conduced to sleep.

Placing the candle on the bar, Tom helped himself to a drink, and then raising up the counter, placed a large cork under it, which allowed a three inch space between it and the floor. His eyes then wandered in all directions, to detect points favorable to his proposed operations.

A low hiss from the kitchen soon drew his attention, and he repaired to the culinary apartment instantaneously.

Two of his fellow-conspirators were there, each having a box, and one with a ball of fine black linen twine.

A large box by the door was opened, and turtles, frogs, and many-colored lizards were quickly secured to pieces of this fine cord, these being made fast with small tacks to the bar, as well as to the wall on every side. Then another box was opened, and snakes of various hues and sizes were drawn forth, one by one, an incision with a pen-knife being made in the skin of each of the squirmers, through which they also were secured and placed among the other reptiles.

A long portion of the string was then stretched from the outer kitchen door around the side of the building, to and through the front door. This was then opened and the line was carried through into the kitchen, the ends being tied together, thus making a circle of string, to which, at intervals of twelve feet, huge rattlesnakes were fastened by shorter strings, allowing the reptiles full play.

These arrangements having been made, two barrels were placed side by side, their heads up, near the door which gave entrance to the kitchen—the purpose of which will presently be made known—and two boards removed from the floor of the "bestest room," at some distance apart.

One of the men now appeared with the stuffed wolf-skin, which was placed just inside the front door and secured in a natural position, where it would not interfere with the working of the proposed "rattlesnake circus."

All the "citz" were then summoned, and removing their shoes, crept up the stairs, laying their heads in two rows upon the floor at the vacant spaces where the boards had been removed. Their faces were covered with black masks, which they had gotten up in obedience to the orders of the sheriff, when they agreed to see the show through.

Don Diablo, the burro of Giant George, was then led to the Nugget, presenting such a horrid appearance that his master would never have recognized his faithful brute pard.

The huge ears of the animal were enveloped in red flannel, strips of the same being also fastened around the body of the donkey, while its legs and tail were profusely decorated with turkey and buzzard-feathers. The huge horns of a mountain goat were made fast to its head, while the "mop" of a buffalo-bull, cut in sections, furnished hair to hang from forehead, under-jaw and fore legs. Nor was this all. A huge pair of eagle-wings were tied one upon each shoulder of Don Diablo, and, being held in an outstretched position, gave the beast a most fearful appearance.

The men who had thus disguised the burro actually shrunk away after standing it upon the two barrels, its hind feet upon one and the fore feet upon the other, facing the bar, it was such an unearthly nondescript.

The eyes of Don Diablo, aroused by this treatment

from his usual disinterestedness in mundane matters, shone in the candle-light from behind the drooping mop of hair.

There were two sets of decanter shelves behind the bar, with a space three feet wide between, where Hank had intended to place a mirror when he could get one from Gold Gulch. After the arrangements of Tom Jones, as detailed, had been perfected, the latter carefully blindfolded the slumbering landlord and then with the assistance of two of the "citz," lifted him carefully, placing him in a seated position in the cavity mentioned, between the two sets of shelves, leaning him against the slabs on either side.

This done, they all retreated with hasty but quiet steps, no sound being heard except the writhing and hissing of snakes, the dragging of turtles along the slabs and an occasional flopping of the ears of Don Diablo. It was evident that the burro, usually so patient, felt just a trifle uneasy in its new character.

The scene in the bar of the Nugget was not merely strange, but horrible.

It was moonlight outside, but the front of the hotel was in shade, and the candles which Hank had placed on the bar, four in number, and others on the walls in tin sconces, cast a sickly glare upon the revolting and appalling scene, well calculated to cause one whose nerves had been demoralized by drink, to be ten times more horrified than if in a natural state of mind—the two long rows of masked faces overhead, the eyes flashing through the holes, contributing not a little to the dread tableau.

The scene, in fact, was so dread and so impressive—the "citz" being filled with genuine sympathy for the poor victim of this practical joke, beginning to think the remedy even worse than the disease—that not one among them thought of laughing; indeed, all had begun to consider that there was little of comedy in the farce now in prospect.

Tom Jones passed to a point at the side of the Nugget, directly in the rear of poor Hank, on the outside of the building, and, jerking his revolver, fired six shots in rapid succession. He then sprang back into the kitchen, and stood to watch the effect upon the landlord.

The form of Hank twitched at the first shot, at the second he squirmed, and as the reports continued he snorted like a frightened horse, throwing up his arms and trying to tear the handkerchief from his eyes. At length he succeeded.

For a moment he sat in a dazed state, his under-jaw hanging lax, his bead-like eyes sweeping his dread surroundings; then, as if he could not believe that he saw aright, he began rubbing his eyes vigorously with his fists.

Again he gazed around, sweeping every corner of the room, until at last the hideously-disguised figure of Don Diablo met his view. Then Hank's red face became of a ghastly hue, his eyes bulged from their sockets, his breath came and went in gasps, his form trembled from head to foot—then, with a piercing shriek of fear and horror, that seemed drawn from the wretched man's inmost soul, he sunk backward limp and senseless into his former position.

CHAPTER XII.

HANK IS HIMSELF AGAIN.

ABOUT the same time that Tom Jones and the "citz" were approaching the Nugget Hotel, on their way to get up a dramatic representation of the interesting state known as "jim-jams"—and they were all quite competent, for not one among them could say that he had never suffered from the same—a dozen Apache braves were galloping down the big canyon from the direction of Dead Man's Gulch, on their way to Sardine-box City.

This small party of warriors had been met by the squaw who had been sent for help by the survivors of the war-party, which had met with disaster and death at the hands of the scouts and "citz." Rendered furious by the news, they had at once headed for the mining-town to seek revenge and scalps; calling upon both the Good and Bad Spirits of their traditions to favor them in avenging the death of their chief, El Orso, and his braves.

But few in number though they were, they decided upon a skulking warfare, their object being to lurk around the town, screened by boulders and thickets, and to capture any stragglers who might come near their coverts during the night-time, or to sneak in and fire the shanties, pouring a volley of bullets and arrows into the whites as the latter rushed into the streets, and then gallop off to a place of safety.

On dashed these red avengers, paint-daubed and feather-bedizened, their black eyes glittering with a thirst for blood, their quirts hissing through the air and cracking about the hams of their half-wild, snorting, and foam-flecked mustangs.

Long, black, coarse hair, bedecked with tiny silver ornaments, held in place above the ears by beaded fillets or knotted red kerchiefs, but flying free behind, at times mingling with the deadly feathered shafts in their quivers and the scalps that decorated their shields.

Naked from the waist up, naught but scalp-fringed buckskin leggings and gay colored breech-cloth in the way of apparel; the leggings tight-fitting, showing the form of the muscular limbs as they rode, swaying from right to left.

Thus on they came like fiends from Gehenna, sent to earth to scatter suffering, horror, torture and death broadcast—on, like demons of the night, flying over the bed of the canyon like dry leaves before a norther—on, for revenge, blood, scalps and victims for the torture!

Not a word, not a sound, save the dull tramp of hoofs on the sand, the snort and pant of steeds, and the hiss and lash of quirts. All bent forward, the manes of their horses at times flying in their

hideously-painted faces, the bars of white gypsum in such strong contrast to the red skin, and lines and daubs of vermilion as to greatly increase the hideousness of their appearance.

Thus they rode until they neared the trail that led up the side of the canyon to the mesquite and big boulder, a point where many tragic scenes had been enacted since the settling of Sardine-box City. Then the red torturers jerked jaw-straps and allowed their wearied mustangs to walk on up the path to the level above in single order.

So infuriated were the Apaches from having seen the big heap of ashes—all that now remained of the greater part of the war-party of El Orso and the lodges and equipments—so insanely eager for revenge, that they repudiated their usual caution, desperate fury being manifested by manner and look and act.

However, when they halted beneath the mesquite and saw the two rows of shanties plainly revealed in the moonlight, they all sprang to the ground and quickly secreted their animals in a dense thicket, in the middle of which was a small grass-covered "open."

This done, two braves being left in charge of the horses, the remaining ten skulked back to the mesquite, and all climbed upon the boulder, where, screened from view by the branches, they shot piercing glances up the street of the burg, they being to the south of Sardine-box City, and but a rifle-shot in distance from the first shanty.

Not a word was spoken. By signs they communicated with each other, these being made in a quick and impatient manner, they being greatly puzzled meanwhile, for not a human being was to be seen in the town.

The two bars on the opposite side of the street from the "Nugget" had been closed at a few minutes after sunset, for the proprietors knew what was on the tapis with Tom Jones and the "citz," and as they had kept open all the previous night, they were glad to retire at once.

Still more to surprise and puzzle the Apaches, they heard the six reports of the sheriff's revolver, fired in quick succession, and yet no human form met their gaze, no other sound broke on their ears.

"Waugh!"

This ejaculation burst from the leader of the party, into whose fillet were thrust two eagle-feathers, and the braves uttered grunts of astonishment, for it was but an hour after sunset, and generally at that time, in such towns, all was bustle and confusion, drunken men yelling in the streets and oftentimes shooting—keeping this up until a late hour of the night.

The pistol-shots were a mystery, for the Indians well knew by the sounds that only one man had been engaged in the shooting, he firing the weapon until the chambers were all empty.

However, notwithstanding these reports of a fire-arm, and the mysterious silence that followed; notwithstanding the seeming desertion of the town, the Apache chief sprang from the boulder with a silent signal of the hand, and strode toward the town, followed by his braves in single file, each clutching his weapons.

On they went until at the border of the thicket, the last cover they could take advantage of. Then they halted; but as no light was to be seen in the town, except a somewhat dim illumination among the shadows opposite the largest shanty in the burg, which was but a few yards distant from them, the hideous braves, led by their chief, all half-bent, their muscles strained for a panther-like bound, and with their eyes glaring and darting glances in every direction, they stole up the street within the shadows of the eastern line of the buildings.

Then, darting across the moonlit space, they quickly collected bunches of dry grass and twigs, which they piled against the slabs, that were now, from exposure to the sun, dry as tinder. While some were thus engaged, others stole up the street, listening intently as they went, and ready to bound upon any unsuspecting white man who might come forth. But not one was visible.

They could hear nothing, save the squirming and thrashing of the snakes in the bar; as the reptiles, tortured by the strings that were drawn through their punctured skin, writhed in rage and agony. This noise was, to the Indians, inexplicable.

But, in a moment more, a piercing shriek from the interior caused every Apache to spring backward, and around, the south corner of the "Nugget;" their amazement increased from the fact that no other sounds succeeded it. They reasoned that but one man was in the shanty, and that the noises which they heard were made by him in some unaccountable manner, after, as they judged, he had shot and killed his companion; for the piercing shriek had not caused any alarm or rush of whites from their abodes.

The people of the town, they inferred, must have gone on the war-path against the squaws who had come down country to avenge their braves who had been slain in the fight. This conclusion rendered the Apaches more furious, and eager to ascertain if this was true; consequently they lingered but a moment, the smell of whisky tending not a little to influence them to make a dash into the illuminated room.

All therefore made ready for a grand rush in pairs, their long scalping knives in hand; the chief to the right and front, and giving the signal by flourishing his blade over the flaunting eagle-feathers in his head-dress.

Without a sound, the leaders sprang through the door-way of the Nugget Hotel, just as Tom Jones, who was peeping through a knot-hole in the partition, had made up his mind to pour some whisky down Hank Holbrook's throat, which, as the

sheriff reasoned, would "fotch him back ter Arizona;" in other words, enable the wretched man to recover his senses.

The scene that followed was one that a beholder would never forget to his dying day. The dash of the Apaches was only to be likened to the stampede of a herd of buffalo. In one respect at least it resembled it; which was, that those in the lead were unable to halt, even if rushing upon instant death for those behind them hurled themselves onward with the most intense fury and with overwhelming force.

First, the chief struck the stuffed wolf, which rolled into his path; but he was forced over this mysterious object, as a sweeping glare revealed to him all the terrifying tableau which had been gotten up by Tom Jones for special benefit of poor Hank.

The eyes of the chief and the brave at his side were next chained by the singularly decorated Don Diablo, which having been asleep, with head lowered and ears hanging listlessly, now raised himself with some show of animation.

With one frantic bound, the Indians landed upon some of the squirming snakes, their heels flying up, and then falling flat upon their backs; while the braves in their rear, being forced over them, fell writhing among the serpents, as howls of superstitious horror and dread terror rung from their throats.

The bar-room of the "Nugget" had presented a most strange, and by no means attractive scene, previous to the advent of the Apaches; but it was little more than a "Punch and Judy racket" in comparison with what followed, when the Indians made the dash inside. Those who did not fall, kept their feet with difficulty, amid the twisting and wriggling forms of their fellow-braves, for a moment only; for they were bereft of all judgment, and completely dazed with the superstitious terror that seized them.

And no less was the intense amazement of the "citz" whose heads were thrust through the floor above; their masked faces being perceived by some of the Apaches, who were by this sight doubly appalled. The maskers themselves were so astonished as was also Tom Jones, that they were incapable of motion, much less of action.

This state of affairs lasted but a moment however; for sudden transformations, and most awful sounds occurred, close following each other and commingling.

First, the loud yell of the sheriff rung above the wild commotion, as the Apaches on the floor freed themselves from each other, and sprang to their feet with horrible howls. Then the "citz," simultaneously gave a most terrific whoop, and revolvers began to crack on every side.

The warriors bounded through the door, so eager were they to escape the mysterious and unaccountable horrors. But, in their haste they impeded each other's flight, being jammed with great force against the sides of the entrance, while some fell headlong into the street to be trampled on by those that followed.

The whoop of the "citz," and the revolver-shots brought Hank Holbrook "back ter Arizona," as Tom Jones afterward expressed it, "just in time ter git in some hefty biz in ther liveliest kinder comber-nashe circus an' meenadgery ever started as a free show."

Hank at once sprang to a standing posture on the shelf. One glimpse, and the slightest conceivable fraction of a "listen" had decided him that "he'd had 'em woss'n ever afore;" and he clutched a decanter, closed his eyes, as if to outwit the hideous specters, and poured down a half pint at least of raw whisky. Then, with a terrific yell, the landlord sprang upon the bar, the very picture of agonized terror, gathering his feeble strength for a spring to the floor, and from thence out into the street, that he might escape them.

But Don Diablo, having probably come to the conclusion that he had had about enough nonsense, and would be imposed upon no longer; or, it may have been, recognizing by sight and smell his old enemies, the Apaches, darted from his position on the barrels to the middle of the floor, just at the moment that Hank made his leap for liberty. The landlord came down, in a spread-eagle style, astride of the burro, clapping the neck of the animal in a vise-like grip; probably somewhat more horrified at discovering that what he had believed to be nothing more than a horrible production of imagination, was a real, living, unclassified specimen of natural history; to which he was forced to cling, or otherwise roll among more repulsive horrors, in the form of the snakes upon the floor.

Out through the door, into the moonlit street, shot Don Diablo in his horrid "make up," with poor Hank upon his back; the short hair on the back and sides of the landlord's head standing out, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

The advent of the equestrian portion of this lively circus, Hank and the burro, was close on the heels of the Apaches, and as the latter, with howls of dread bounded down the street, gazing in terror over their shoulders, and with bated breath, Don Diablo pointed after them in hot pursuit, as if he had suddenly sifted the whole business, and had concluded that he had a right to have his share of the fun in his own way, as it seemed to be all on the "free lunch" system.

But the Apaches had not gone more than twenty yards from the "Nugget," the blaze of the now flaming shanties revealing even the smallest article on their persons, when, like the rush of a "norther" around the corner, bounded the masked "citz," Tom Jones in the lead, all yelling like fiends, and with revolvers in hand, full-cocked and ready for business.

Down the street they shot, the burning shanties increasing their fury and thirst for the blood of this daring squad of savages; and the sight of poor Hank, clinging to Don Diablo, and gaining upon the Apaches, who without doubt would murder the wretched landlord when they recovered a little from their astonishment, making them still more eager to close in with the red fiends.

Never, perhaps, did human beings run faster than did both the whites and reds; and soon the revolvers of the former began to crack spitefully; as any one of them could send a ball among the flying Indians without endangering Hank. But Don Diablo knew the ground better than did the Apaches; and, as he had been to the boulder a thousand times, he made a short cut, thus leaving the "citz" clear ground.

In desperate bounds, the savages shot over clumps of cacti, between rocks and around the thorny thickets, their death-hoofs sounding as they fled.

The two braves who had been left with the horses, hearing the tumult led the animals to the bed of the canyon; but only five of the ten who had gone into the town dashed down the trail and they closely followed by the "citz." Of these five, but two reached the canyon-bed alive, and they sprang upon their horses, only to be shot from the affrighted creatures, as were also the two guards—not one of El Orso's war-party's avengers being left alive.

The sheriff and the now jubilant "citz" soon regained the level ground, where to their further surprise they discovered Hank, seemingly recovered from his fright, and seated on Don Diablo, looking as natural as possible.

"Tom Jones," he yelled, "what in thunderation's this ye're givin' me? What's bu'sted? Hev I bin ersleep like ole Rip Winkle, an' hes yer turned ther 'Nugget' inter a museum?"

"Can't I take a see-estar without ther danged 'Paches runnin' inter ther burg an' suttin' ther shanties erfire? I say, whar's ther 'Angel' an' my ole 'oman? Hes thar' bin another blow-up? Air I a man, er a mule? Dog-gone my skin ef I ain't mixed up permisc'us-like!"

The "citz" roared with laughter as Hank rattled this off in a wheezy voice, and they bore the poor fellow back to the "Nugget." Then all made a night of it, after releasing the turtle and frogs, and burning the mutilated snakes, before Hank was allowed to enter the bar. Tom Jones took charge of the landlord's drinks, limiting them most decidedly; and thus Hank escaped having the real *bona fide* "jim-jams," although he swore he had "hed a hefty touch" of the same, the "citz" having made him believe this—they vowing that they had seen nothing unusual about the appearance of Don Diablo, from the back of which Hank was dragged a moment or so after he had "come back ter biz," and before he could make anything like a critical examination of the burro.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW PARD.

THE second night after the departure of Giant George and Arizona Jack with the two Mexican ladies from Sardine-box City they were encamped in a gorge of the range, somewhat like that in which the "Tarantula of Taos" had passed his time after arriving from the burg, until his return for a fresh supply of liquor.

But thirty miles have our friends traveled down the range on account of the fatigue of the ladies, and upon reaching a point ten miles below, their intention was to strike out from the range, over the open plain, in a westerly direction toward Tucson, encamping the following night at a water-hole, within a day's travel of their destination. Their animals were staked upon the grass-grown bed of the gulch, which was here and there dotted with clumps of cedars, as were the walls of the cliff on either side; patches of prickly-pears were also clinging to the rough adamantine sides of the gorge, at points where there seemed to be no earth to nourish them, nor afford chance for vegetable life.

At the head of the gorge was a limpid spring, and within a clump of cedars near it, Marietta and her mother had spread their blankets for the coming night, while opposite, in an open lawn-like space that extended some distance, was the camp-fire. All had partaken of the evening meal, and Giant George and his pard, seated upon fragments of rock, were enjoying a smoke. The ladies, mother and daughter, were a beautiful pair, and seemed strangely out of place in this wild gorge, with nothing but jagged rock, and spur, and peak, around and above them.

Graceful as those of a prairie fawn are the willowy movements of Marietta Refugio, her lustrous eyes casting fond glances into her mother's face, and at times gazing with gratitude toward the scouts.

Both the ladies were naturally filled with thoughts of their home; their conversation, which want of space prevents our recording, being in regard to the loved husband and father in Tucson, who had organized a party of his friends to follow the trail of the merciless Apaches who had stolen his child Marietta from his extensive ranch at Santa Rita, near Tucson.

Mother and daughter are confident that Don Refugio has long since returned from his fruitless search, and is now suffering a double anguish and grief, in regard to the loss of both wife and daughter.

"I doesn't feel 'zactly nat'ral," said Giant George, knocking the ashes from his corn-cob pipe against the sole of his boot, and addressing Jack, who was smoking placidly; "somehow er 'nother, I'm pestered with a suspish' thet things ain't goin' squar' et ther burg. Thar's bin sich a heft o' hellishness

shoved onter Sardine-box since she war located, thet hit doesn't seem es though she c'u'd glide easy-like herearter.

"Ef ther 'Angel' warn't goin' ter take ther hearse fer Gold Gulch, I sh'u'd be more worried; though hit ain't a dead sure thing thet she'd git thar, right side up wi' care. Thar's so many hellyuns in Arizona, red, white, an' yaller, thet yer doesn't know when er whar some on 'em won't jump yer.

"Sides thet, I'm worried es 'gards Hank, fer he war chuck-full o' p'ison, an' he'll git a hull meenadgery in his butes, ef he kep' on pourin' down bug-juice arter we-'uns glided down range."

"I don't apprehend any danger between the burg and Gold Gulch, pard George," returned Jack, confidently. "But I agree with you that life in Sardine-box is uncertain. Sudden and unexpected calamities have been the order of the day, almost every week since the burg was 'slapped up,' judging from what you have told me, and my own experiences since I have been there.

"However, everything now points to a prosperous future, with peace and quiet, for the 'lead' laid open by the explosion is, without doubt, the grand bonanza of Arizona, and will cause a rush from up-country.

"As to Hank, poor fellow, whisky has got a tight grip on him, and I really don't believe he can weather another 'jim-jam circus.' I'm sorry for Marm Holbrook, and I'm sorry for Hank, too. He's a whole-souled little man, and they're a well-matched pair, if we count the whisky out.

"But, George, look at Marietta; what a picture of grace and beauty she is, and how different her mother appears from what she was when we first saw her at Dead Man's Gulch—tattered, torn, scratched, and mad as was Hank, when suffering from mania! That cognomen, Juanita the Wild, given her by the people of Tucson, after grief at the abduction of her daughter had driven her insane, was but too fitting.

"It makes one's blood run cold to think what her fate might have been, had not Lena Reynolds also been captured, and we started out to her rescue. Verily, she can say, with Dante, that she has passed through Hades."

"I doesn't know Danty, an' never heerd o' Hay-dees," returned the giant scout; "I reckon hit ain't located in Arizona. But I kin take a afferdavy thet Marietta hev hed a ormighty hefty 'mount o' condemned cussedness, wi' mighty little comfort mixed in o' late."

Jack lay back, and laughed heartily.

"George," he said, presently; "Hades means the sulphurous 'locate,' bossed by the black gentleman who is said to be ornamented with a tail, and who has hoofs like a buffalo-bull. I think it would be an appropriate 'cog' for Sardine-box City about now, if Marm Holbrook was not within its confines; for the 'Angel of the Range' has gone, and we have with us—"

Jack was here interrupted by the sound of a prolonged yell, which came from the western side of the range, beyond the mouth of the gulch, and on the trail they had so recently traveled. This breaking in on the evening air came when the two ladies, with happy and inquisitive faces, approached the camp-fire, to ascertain what it was that had amused Jack.

The two scouts sprung to their feet, as though they had received a shock from a powerful electric battery. Amazement, not unmixed with apprehension, was stamped upon their features, while the faces of the ladies turned the pallor of death; both trembling with dread, their past fearful experiences flashing through their minds, and creating fresh fears the most harrowing.

For a moment all stood as if petrified, their gaze fixed down the gulch, and all their senses strained, when again the wild yell broke upon the air, echoing and re-echoing from crag to crag.

"Git, senora an' senorita! Git ahindt ther rocks. Jack, snatch yer long shuter an' p'int fer ther same locate, ter take keer o' ther weemin. I'll hold ther camp and ther critters. Hit's a white human that's shuttin' off his extry wind, an' thar may be a hull batch o' crooked cusses. What in thunderation hev brung'd them inter this hyer locate? I'll fill ther gulch wi' stiffs ef they buck ag'in us."

Giant George rattled these words off in a rapid manner; rage, determination and reckless daring in his face and voice. Meanwhile the ladies, in all haste, obeyed his orders. Not so Arizona Jack.

Grasping his "Winchester" the latter advanced to the side of the giant scout, jerking the lever of his rifle and throwing a cartridge from the magazine at the same time, as did his huge pard. The latter made no protest against Jack's having repudiated his directions. Thus they waited events.

The lower portion of the gulch was free from grass and covered with gravelly wash, and soon the sound of a horse galloping up the same was plainly heard. The listeners knew at once that but a single rider was approaching, and this caused them to feel somewhat relieved in regard to the ladies.

Then, as if the lone horseman knew that he was nearing those who might shoot him at any instant, he yelled out ere he came in sight:

"Whoop-er-e-e! Ker-whoop! I'm a-comin' on a cyclone rush! I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos what never lost a leg. O-o-o-ob, yes! Giant George, I'm on yer trail chuck-full o' stud-hoss biz an' infermashe! Drap yer shooter an' don't git hyderphobic!"

Every word was shot out by the strong lungs of the border bummer in a voice that enabled the listeners to hear distinctly, and each now gazed at the other in bewilderment, while they put down their rifles.

Giant George, dumfounded at the audacity of one

whom he well knew to be crooked, and who had cause to fear him, stood staring at the cedars which screened the new-comer from view but a moment. Then, in wild bounds, snorting with pain and fury, as the cruel spurs tore its flanks, the horse broke from the thicket and was brought to a halt, just opposite the two scouts, the rider, who hugged closely to his breast a demijohn of whisky, yelling as he came up:

"Whoop-er-e-e! Ker-whoop! Hyer I bees, boyees, steady by jarks. Right side up, like a blue streak, no matter how I strike dirt. Gaze et my allerbaster brow an' 'Pollo-like' natermy two skips an' ruminate whether yer recog's me!"

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an', Giant George, yer hes allers tuck me fer a bad cit, 'coz I'm a migratin' meanderer floatin' 'roun' permisc'us-like an' sp'iles a power o' p'ison. Howsomever, I'm hyer ter g'in yer opine o' me a flip-flop, fer I've rid, hot an' heavy, ter save yer har an' ther cast-steele weemin."

"George, ther dang'd 'Paches air comin' down range on ther whoop-er-e-e, an' thar's bleed an' ter-tur' in ther evenin' atmo-spear. Ther squaws o' El Orso's war-party an' a sprinklin' o' bucks air comin' in jist a hummin', but we-'uns kin salerwate 'em wi' ther help o' bug-juice ter keep up vim."

Having thus delivered himself, to the utter astonishment of his hearers, the Tarantula threw one of his long legs over his horse's head, and slid from his saddle. Then, removing the cork from the demijohn, he recuperated his wasted energies by a liberal drink.

Arizona Jack stared first at the vagabond borderer and then at Giant George in a questioning manner, as if he doubted the statements of the stranger.

"Whar'd yer diskiver ther 'Paches, an' how'd yer know anythin' 'bout El Orso's war-party?" asked George quickly.

The "Tarantula" put the demijohn down on the sward at the feet of the scouts, then proceeded to slip the bridle from his horse, to allow the animal to feed, seeming utterly indifferent to his present surroundings and coming events; hesitating to answer George's questions, in order that he might have time to concoct a tale that would be plausible, and yet not reveal his complicity in the "crookedness" that had prevailed in Sardine-box City.

Arizona Jack took advantage of this hesitation, and put some additional questions to the bummer.

"And how did you know that we had ladies with us, and that we had come down the range?"

"Don't flustercate me," was the reply. "Help yerselves ter p'ison, and don't ax too much et onc't; fer I've hed a long lope under a sun like Tophet, an' my brain-box air 'bout bu'sted. I l'arned 'bout yer fight an' 'bout ther weemin, from a pilgrim that I see'd 'tween Sardine-box an' Gold Gulch, when I war meanderin' down range; an' I war takin' a see-ester on ther tip-top peaks, 'bove ther flip-flop o' a buzzard's wing, an' ther scratchin' o' a griz' b'ar, on ther boulders below, woked me up et sun-up. I carved ther griz', an' hed my breakfus' often his carkiss, and then gazed 'roun' my locate."

"Fust off, I foun' I war 'bout Sardine-box City, an' I see'd yer start down range. Then I see'd ther skulkin' 'Paches war watchin' yer, an' war eager fer har an' bleed. I know'd they'd skupe yer an' I concluded ter scoot in, an' gi'n yer ther hull biz; but I war dry, so I struck down range, and p'inted fer ther 'Nugget,' arter whisk'. Thar I see'd ther hearse glide off wi' ther 'oman yer call ther 'Angel,' and Marm Holbrook. When I roved in ther burg, thar warn't no 'citz' ter be see'd, an' Hank war drunk. I tole him 'bout ther 'Paches, s'plied myself wi' this hyer John-demmy, an' then skuted."

"Reckon Hank's gut jim-jams by this."

"When I struck down range, I see'd ther 'Paches on yer trail, but they laid low in ther gulch an' camped. I sent some big boulders down inter ther gulch, an' sp'iled some on 'em. Then I dusted. But arter I gut ter ther pass, I see'd 'em comin' a-b'ilin', an' they'll be hyer afore soon. Now yer gut ther hull p'ogramme from ther Terrantaler, an' hit's squar' plain lingo. I'm hyer ter help ter wallop ther hellyuns—"

"Hold up!" interrupted Giant George. "Ther condemned scum air comin' an' we-'uns air in a tight box."

"Git ther weemins up ther rocks, Jack, lively! Terrantaler, show now thet ye're squar' an' white. Lead ther nags up ter ther head o' ther gulch, ahindt ther loose boulders. Dang my skin ef this hain't bilious, on 'count o' ther kaliker. Ther dang'd squaws air woss'n bucks, when they gits thar hyderphobic up!"

Jack now rushed to the affrighted ladies, and assisted them up the rough wall of the gorge.

The "Tarantula" worked lively, leading the horses, as directed, behind the boulders, but still retained his grip on the demijohn; while Giant George sprang further down the gulch to listen.

A moment, he bent his ear to the west. That was sufficient.

The thundering tramp of a large number of galloping horses was now plainly heard. Then the scout knew that the "Tarantula" had spoken true.

The hideous Apache hags, and murder-mad braves were coming, eager for revenge; for blood, and scalps, and victims for the torture-stake!

CHAPTER XIV.

AGAINST DESPERATE ODDS.

GIANT GEORGE sprung upright, his eyes blazing with fury, his teeth clinched, and his hands clutched in a deathlike grip about his rifle. Then he spoke in soliloquy, in a deep, determined tone, that spoke the unbending resolution of the man:

"Ef ther painted torturers gits ther leetle gal ag'in, they gits her arter ther sculp o' Giant George

hev bin tored from his head, his heart's bleed hev stained ther rocks, an' ther Good Spirit hev called him 'over ther range.' I didn't s'pose ther condemned squaws 'u'd be so p'ison eager; but ef they gits a peep at Juanita an' Marietta, they'll fight like panthers ter captur' 'em. I hates ter war wi' weemin; but I sw'ar they ain't weemin—they're hags o' hell!"

Listening again, the giant scout could no longer hear a sound. The trampling of the steeds, in headlong gallop, had ceased, and all was silent—silent as death. Everything, indeed, was suggestive of death; for well the scout knew that the Apaches had discovered the gulch and the trail, and were now stealing under cover toward the camp, filled with exultation, and thirsting for revenge.

Whirling rapidly around, Giant George darted to the head of the gulch, and came near knocking the "Tarantula" over, as the latter turned the corner of a huge boulder, demijohn in hand.

George could not but admit to himself that the burly bummer must have some good in him, else he would not have taken the trouble to warn him and his friends of danger; especially as he had, himself, warned the "Tarantula" from many camps and towns, with the threat that he would have him lynched if he returned. He could not now, in his honest good-natured soul, repulse the man, or show aught of the doubt that he felt of his honesty and good intentions; although he was suspicious, even when there was no apparent cause for it.

At all events, the big boaster was needed in this dire and unlooked-for emergency, and he appeared to be totally without fear or concern as to the danger ahead. This puzzled the scout, as much as had the bummer's appearance as a savior of the party from a surprise, which could only have terminated in the death of all; for George believed the "Tarantula" to be a coward.

"Hyer, George," spoke the border bummer, in a hoarse whisper, as he passed the demijohn, "take a hefty pour-down ter brace yer nerves, an' then we'll climb up, fer I reckon yer ain't goin' ter lay 'roun' hyer, an' 'low ther or'nary scum ter pile onter yer, an' skin yer head, an' then skute up arter ther weemin."

George grasped the demijohn, and drank quickly, while he replied, in a scarce audible voice:

"Thet's whar ye're right, Terranche! We-uns must glide up ther rocks. Ther savage skunks air on ther crawl. I see thet yer hes ther critters all hunk, an' I thank yer. 'Sides thet, I spit out right hyer thet ef yer hes 'cided ter turn squar', an' run on straight open trails, as ter-day's work seems ter p'int, Giant George'll stan' by yer, an' pull yer outen ther bog o' 'crookedness'."

"I allers sot yer down es a white-livered, no-'count human, without 'sand' enough ter buck ag'in' a cotton-tailed rabbit; an' I opines I hes been mistuck, by yer actions so fur ter-night. Shake, an' then we'll climb; fer ther ball air 'bout ter open, I reckon, wi' lively music. Ther weemin must be kep' from bein' tuck, ef we-uns goes under tryin'."

"Skute, George! I'm chuck-full o' bug-juice, an' hyderphobic griz'-bar indig'. Wait, an' watch me carve 'Paches, an' then spit out yer gab 'bout ther Terrantaler."

"'S-s-s-sh!" came from the lips of the giant scout, and both then stole, with caution, up the rough rock-strewn and cedar-dotted wall of the gulch; soon reaching, to their surprise, a little natural fort of crescent shape, there being a curved line of rocks, breast high, around it, and over which a view of the gulch below could be obtained. The rear of it was a wall of perpendicular rock, at the base of which were two huge boulders, affording a safe retreat for Juanita and Marietta. There they now crouched, their arms wound about each other, and as pale as death; being filled with the most torturing apprehension, and but little reassured by the words of Arizona Jack.

The "Tarantula" threw down his blanket near the wall, and placed the demijohn beside it, while George and Jack peered down into the gulch, with anxious, piercing glances.

The border bummer crossed the level crescent-shaped space, and then around the huge masses of rock, halting as he saw the Castilian ladies, and tearing his battered sombrero from his head in polite salutation.

"Scuse me fer shovin' my carkiss hyer, ladies," he said; "but I'm eager ter tell yer thet I'm a roarin' rager, an' kin clean out my weight in wile cats."

"I hes see'd yer purty faces, an' yer venus-like 'natemies, in ther cyclone-whiz waltzes et Tucson an' Santa Rita; an' I hes 'shook' wi' Don Refugio more'n onc't. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, an' I tends ter spile ther knock-kneed, paint-daubed, greasy kiote spawn, an' go through 'em es quick es lubricated lightnin' through a gooseberry bush."

"We'll clean 'em out so speedy thet they won't hev time ter gi'n ther death-squeals. I'm a boss border hero, I am! Listen ter ther ding-dong o' my iron heart, an' gaze at my 'Pollo-like' 'natemy. I'm mussed up some from slingin' myself ter warn yer thet death an' tortur' war in ther evenin' atmospear; but hit's 'pay dirt' fer you-uns thet I'm smeared with—I'm gamblin' on thet!"

"Lay low, an' carm yerselves; fer yer ain't goin' ter be tuck, while ther Terranche kin crook a finger, er grip a slasher. I'm goin' ter fight, ontill ther ding-dong o' my iron heart simmers down ter ther flip-flop o' a dyin' June-bug's wing."

How long the "Tarantula" would have talked, it is impossible to say; but he was now recalled to the emergencies of the moment by a hiss from Giant George, and bowing to the ladies, who had been bewildered by his appearance and language, he whirled awkwardly about, strode to the natural

breast-works, squatted on the rocks, and grasping the demijohn, poured down his ever-craving throat a prodigious quantity of its contents. He then passed it to George and Jack, who felt that, if ever they needed stimulants it was then.

When the "Tarantula" had passed the whisky, he jerked knife and revolver from his belt, laid the weapons upon the stone in front of him, and jammed his hat back on his head, assuming a most ferocious and daring expression. He then gripped pistol and knife, saying in a whisper, as he gazed into the faces of the two scouts:

"Now, boyees, I'm ready fer ther 'Pache cirkuss; an' I'm 'primed fer pluggin' red meat. When yer hear my 'Whoop-er-ee, Ker-whoop,' yer'll hear somethin' drap close arterwards; an' drap heavy! I'm running my sheer o' this hyer fight, on a bug-juice foundashe."

"I reckon hit's 'bout time ter see ther flicker o' ther sneakin' kiotes through ther bush. Thar playin' ther snake-crawl biz this time, dead sure!"

Giant George and Arizona Jack gave but little attention to the "Tarantula." Their eyes were sweeping the gulch below, from the base of the rock where their steeds were secured, screened from the view of any who might come that way, to the line of boulders and cedars at the very foot of the adamantine wall.

The silver moon rolled in the eastern heavens, thus causing the base of the cliff to be in a shadow. The camp-fire had died down, but Giant George had no doubt that the smoke of the same had guided the Apaches, and betrayed the position of the camp.

Not long had the watchers to wait, for a hiss from the giant scout signaled the approach of the foe, but a moment after the "Tarantula" had ceased speaking; and all saw the heads of six hideous war-painted braves thrust from the low cedar branches, they being upon their hands and knees, and their black snake-like eyes glaring with exultation. They were evidently confident that the whites had rolled themselves in their blankets for the night, and were at their mercy.

The glow of the smoldering camp-fire and the trampled grass were plain proof to the red prowlers that they had reached the camp of their hated foes, and that revenge for their wounds, and for the death of their chief and fellow-braves, was within their grasp.

Onward the red fiends came, still crawling, their long scalping-knives between their white and glittering teeth, their repulsive lips curled away from the same, like those of enraged wild beasts. Their rifles they dragged along the ground, and were closely followed by the hideous hags with bows and arrows, ready at an instant's warning to be sent on their errand of death.

Panther-like, the hellish horde glided over the "open" toward the head of the gulch, their heads turning this way and that like alarmed turtles, their bronzed and wiry forms bending as they darted glances above, ahead and to the right and left, every sense and muscle being strained to detect the position of their hated foes.

The snort of one of the horses behind the boulders acted electric-like upon every squaw and brave. Arrows were fitted to bow-strings with a simultaneous movement, quick as flashes of light, while the braves presented their cocked rifles toward the cedars and boulders that concealed the animals. All this was visible to the watchers above.

The Apaches evidently reasoned that the sound made by the horse would alarm the whites, or attract the attention of any one of the latter who might have been left on guard; consequently it impressed them with the fact that they were in a most exposed position, for a moment after they all sprung to their feet, and in a crouching attitude stole across the open space to the cedars and boulders, within which were the horses of the whites.

The latter gazed upon the red foe from their rock-bound retreat, ready to pour death down among them.

No sooner were the horses discovered than the Apaches glided stealthily here and there among the cedars; but finding no trace of the whites, they then bent their glances upward, evidently not a little disappointed, and reasoning that their intended victims had heard the tramp of their mustangs and sought a favorable position for defense.

Thus far not a sound had broken the silence of the gulch, except the snorting of the animals, they having scented the red foe; and as the scattered Apaches again collected themselves, the braves, by quick gestures, indicated their intentions and orders. They argued, from the fact that the horses were equipped for the trail, that beyond all doubt the whites were crouching among the rocks up the cliff at the head of the gulch above them, and watching for an opportunity to steal down, bound upon their animals, and thus make their escape.

The quick waving of the bronzed hands, so often stained with the innocent blood of helpless women and babes, no sooner ceased than all sprung along the base of the cliff at the head of the gulch, and up here and there amid the rough rocks, where foothold could be obtained; but not far had they proceeded when three spurts of fire flashed above them all at the same instant, and then a thunderous report rung down the gulch, echoing amid crags and chasms and clefts, followed by the terrible war-whoop and vengeful shrieks of the hags and the howls of death.

Through all of these rung the sharp, spiteful crack of revolvers, the twang of bow-strings and the terrific reports of the overloaded rifles of the surviving braves—three having been shot dead at the first fire of the scouts and the "Tarantula."

And clinging to each other, fear and terror in their

eyes, their fair faces as ghastly as death, their forms trembling as though stricken with an ague, their ears tortured by the vocal pandemonium and the sound of fire-arms and twang of bow-strings, crouched the Senora Juanita Refugio and her daughter Marietta amid the rocks and the dark shadows, while feathered shafts fell with shattered points from the cliffs above and around them.

"Madre de Dios! save my child!" burst in prayerful supplication from the trembling lips of the mother; and then both, clinging to each other more closely than before, their long hair mingling and vailing their trembling forms, listened to the hell of sounds that chilled their blood, and banishing hope from their hearts, left room only for deathly and horrible despair.

CHAPTER XV.

TRIUMPH OF THE RIGHT.

THE fiery flashes and thunderous reports above their heads, together with the fall of some of their number, proved by the death-howls, at first filled the Apache horde with consternation. The report of two rifles and a revolver sounded on the night air, in the rock-walled gulch, like the volley of a company of infantry. This, and the repeated echoes, for the moment caused the Indians to think that a large number of whites were entrenched above them.

But this delusion was soon banished. The reds comprehended the secret of the terrific report and echoes; and sounding their wild war-cries, they sprung from rock to rock, the squaws in their mad fury letting fly volleys of arrows, which of course fell harmless against the cliff in the rear of the three men, who now poured a galling fire down among the fast-flitting Apaches, who, in the dim shadows, afforded not the plainest marks.

In a very short space of time the three surviving braves sprung, with wild war-whoops, from different points over the rock breastworks, followed by the screeching squaws, all frantic with murderous fury.

George, Jack and the Tarantula bounded backward after firing the remaining shots in their revolvers at the hideous hags, every report being the death-knell of one of their number. The moon rolled upward, having now reached an elevation from which it illuminated the outer wall of the natural fort.

Then thrusting pistols in their belts, the three whites jerked their bowies to meet on equal terms the three braves who came bounding upon them.

The scene that followed was simply terrific, and caused even the savage squaws to halt in their headlong clambering over the rocky barrier, all gazing with a fixed stare as the clash of steel rung out, and they caught sight of the three daring whites—two of them giants in form and strength, and the third a perfect model of manhood, though less in stature than his companions. Until this moment George and Jack had doubted the staying qualities of the Tarantula; but as his war-cries sounded—his thunderous "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!"—and his long and muscular arms flew like lightning through the air as the Apache braves dashed forward, they knew that he had the requisite sand for the emergency, whether inborn or whisky-born, they had neither the time nor the inclination to ponder over.

With every muscle strained for the life-and-death conflict, the whites, nerved by the thought of the two helpless women behind the boulder, who might at any moment be discovered and cut to pieces by the infuriated hags—the reds, too, filled with a fiendish thirst for revenge—each trio, with eyes shooting glances of hate and fury, sprung upon the other, their knives clashing and throwing out sparks of fire, while the horrible sight chained the squaws to the positions which they occupied when first they caught sight of the interior of the natural fort.

But the red braves knew little of the skill of their white foes with the knife; and doubtless they would have retreated from such a conflict had they realized that their foes were men of such gigantic build and strength. But their mad rush had been made, and there could be no retreat.

A moment only elapsed after the clash of steel when blood spurted from the knife-arms of each brave, causing howls from the squaws. These sounds warned the whites that they had no time to lose; that the squaws would swarm upon them in a moment, or fill their bodies with arrows—this having been thus far prevented by keeping the warriors between themselves and the furious hags.

Realizing the value of time, and that life or death to all depended upon prompt action, Giant George yelled:

"Carve ther cusses, boyees! Then jump fer ther weemin, behindt ther boulder, an' load yer shooters!"

"Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" shouted the Tarantula, as, by one powerful downward stroke, he clove his red opponent from breast to thigh.

With a fearful death-yell, the brave sunk to the earth.

His last war-whoop had been sounded.

At the same instant, the bowie of the giant scout was plunged to the hilt in the breast of his antagonist; and Arizona Jack, yelling, "Whoop her through, or bu'st," by a powerful slash to the right, nearly severed the head from the body of the brave he had forced to the very wall of the rocky stronghold. As the warrior threw up his hands, Jack grasped him by the ankles, and launched him over the wall, the corpse striking upon the boulders below, with a horrid sound of crashing bones.

The death of the three braves was almost simul-

taneous, and was followed by a fiendish chorus of howls, vengeful whoops and rallying shrieks from the hideous hags who at once poured over the rocky barrier; but the whites sprung quickly behind the boulder, Giant George calling out:

"Jack, load ther 'sixes,' an' me an' Terranch'll stan' off ther condemned squaws each side ther boulder!"

But there were three feet in space between the boulder and the wall of the cliff, forming a passage of some fifteen feet in length, in the middle of which were crouched the two terrified women. Immediately the giant scout and the "Tarantula" took up their position knives in hand, one at each entrance, the huge rock being very high, and having perpendicular sides, which prevented the squaws from attacking, or from casting themselves down from its top.

Jack, with quick movements, began to reload, jerking the revolvers from the belts of his pards for the purpose; at the same time endeavoring to cheer the two despairing women by shouting hopeful words. This was a necessity, as the squaws kept up a continuous chorus of mad whoops and shrieks; being kept from immediate approach to the whites, by Giant George and the "Tarantula" hurling immense stones upon them.

Jack loaded the revolvers expeditiously, handing them to their owners; and then a plan of escape was quickly formed, the giant scout giving the necessary directions to favor success. Prompt action was also a point of advantage, the squaws being mostly at the side of the huge rock, where the scouts were posted.

The plan was for Jack and himself to hasten down the gulch side with the two women, guarding and assisting the latter; while the "Tarantula" should keep in their rear, and prevent the furious hags from too close approach. George assured his pards that once upon their horses, they could quite easily evade the squaws; as the mustangs of the latter were, without doubt, secreted some distance off, at the mouth of the gulch.

To favor this attempt, the "Tarantula" blazed away at the hags, who stood yelling in the proposed line of escape, wounding two of them; his nerves having become unsteady from his not having indulged very recently in his favorite beverage. This fact was brought to his mind by his failure to "plant" the bullets in vital parts of his intended victims.

Thus far, strange to say he had not thought of his demijohn; and perhaps nothing would have so suddenly and so deeply impressed him, as the recalling of this fact, that the whisky was within the enemies' lines. Without a word of explanation, the "Tarantula" made a spring into the air, like the huge hairy spider after which he had chosen to name himself, and nearly as far as that poisonous pest of the river-bottom, even taking size into consideration.

"Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" rung the war-cry of the tall, ungainly borderer, as he bounded from his post, out into the natural fort; his arms flying about like Don Quixote's wind-mills, his glittering bowie carving the air. So strange were his yells and appearance—the manner of his having split the brave open being fresh in the minds of the squaws—that those on the south side of the walled space sprung to the north; even rushing around the boulder corner, and thus exposing themselves to the fire of Giant George.

Grasping his beloved demijohn, with desperate clutch, he gave another "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" and rushed back to his position, meeting George and Jack at the side of the boulder, with the pallid-faced, trembling senora and her daughter; the giant scout having perceived at once that the "Tarantula" had caused a very favorable change in the position of the squaws, and that the moment for an attempted escape with the women had arrived.

"Ker-whoop out ag'in, Terranche!" said George, "an' we-uns'll glide down the rocks. Keep ther hags from bein' too p'ison an' eager, an' we'll jump stock an' git up an' git."

Dangerous as was delay, the Tarantula pointed the bottom of the demijohn skyward, and the gurgling of the liquor down his "errigatin' ditch" betrayed the fact that it was no small quantity of whisky that he drank, but before the squaws sprung out from the north side of the boulder, the war-cry of the bumper sounded, and jerking a revolver he let fly four shots, the bullets striking the side of the cliff near the Apache hags, while Jack, with Marietta, followed by George and the senora, hastened down the gulch wall as expeditiously as was possible, the scouts having no little trouble in assisting the terror-stricken women.

The movement was so quickly executed that the heads of the retreating party disappeared below the rock walls before the squaws, now rendered furiously frantic at having been for a moment or two inactive through their fear of one man, rushed from behind the rock, with arrows fitted to bow-strings, while the Tarantula was engaged in a bear-dance, yelling like a fiend, revolver in one hand and demijohn in the other.

Instantly half a score of bows twanged, but the burly borderer sunk quickly to the mountain shelf, and the deadly shafts flew over him with a whirling sound like the flight of birds, the steel points glinting in the moonlight, as the missiles whirled on their fruitless mission, grating along the sides of the cliff.

The Tarantula instantly sprung to his feet, bounded upon the barrier of loose stones, with a far-sounding "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" and then down the gulch side he went at dangerous speed, leaving the squaws dumfounded at his apparent desertion of the other whites.

Immediately they rushed, with frantic yells, to the

rear of the boulder, evidently suspicious that they had been cheated out of their revenge, which was more to them than life itself. Then, with outcries of disappointed rage and fury, they sprung in a body to the barrier and gazed below. There they saw a sight that drove them to frenzy, being naught else than the hated captive who had been the prime cause, as they believed, of the death and destruction of their war-party and the camp of their chief, El Orso—she who had bereft them of their braves and caused Apache blood to flow like water, Marietta, the Rose of Santa Rita, the infatuator of El Orso, and "Bad Medicine," her mother.

These women they saw mounted and speeding into the cedars, followed by the gigantic scout and his inseparable pard, Arizona Jack; while, seated upon his horse in the middle of the clear moonlit space, the camp of their white foes, was the terrible brave who had split one of their warriors in twain by a single flash of his knife.

For a moment the foiled hags clutched at the rocks, their snaky eyes fixed, their teeth set and grinding together, incapable, from their rage and disappointment, of motion. Then they gave a piercing, vengeful yell of bloodthirsty frenzy, and bounded over the barrier; but the taunting and triumphant shout of the Tarantula sounded far down the gulch ere they reached the camp.

On went the scouts with their fair charges, the latter scarce believing escape to be possible, all at headlong speed, over the moonlit level plain, southwest, toward Tucson; and after reaching a point fully a mile from the range, they jerked their horses to a halt, glancing back in apprehension and anxiety at the non-appearance of the Tarantula.

And, as they were about to return, resolved not to desert one who had, without doubt, saved them from death, as well as the women from a horrible fate, the anxious looks upon their faces disappeared, giving place to extreme relief and mirth, for out from the gulch galloped more than two-score of equipped mustangs, the "Tarantula" in the rear, guiding his horse to right and left at terrific speed to keep them together. He still held fast to the inevitable demijohn, while he whirled a long-lashed quirt in his right-hand. On he came, his "Ker-whoop, Ker-whoop!" sounding over the prairie.

This the party saw, and then out from the cedars rushed the thrice-maddened Apache hags, with frantic yells, for not only had they been vanquished when their hated foes seemed to be at their mercy, but nearly half their number and all of their braves lay mangled and dead. And here, their mustangs were being driven from them forever, thus leaving them on foot, hundreds of miles from their mountain retreat, in the enemy's country.

But relief and joy filled the hearts of Senora Refugio and her daughter; George and Jack being also greatly relieved, as at one time they had feared it would be beyond their power to save the women from capture, and themselves from death or torture.

The "Tarantula" was of course full of whisky and exultation, as he in his mind counted the "duckets" that the mustangs would be sold for in Tucson, and the probable amount he could squeeze out of Don Refugio for his energetic exertions, the "griz-b'ar fight an' vim he had shoved out," in the rescue of the wife and daughter of the latter.

His celebrated war-cry sounded each time that he lowered the contents of the demijohn; while the half-wild mustangs flew with velocity over the plain. The scouts took positions as right and left "rounders," the ladies falling back in the rear of the fast-galloping animals.

And thus, gentle reader, we leave them for the present, Juanita and Marietta becoming more cheerful and natural as they proceeded toward their home, and the father and husband who awaited them.

All were confident that the dangers of the journey were now over.

There is but one night more for them, in which to encamp on mother earth. The next will find them in the plaza of Tucson.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END CROWNS THE WORK.

Two days after the escape of the scouts and the two Castilian ladies from the gulch, they arrived safely in Tucson; corraling the mustangs on the outskirts of the town, George and Jack refusing to acknowledge any claim on the animals, and insisting that they belonged by right to the "Tarantula."

The latter accordingly disposed of them for a considerable sum; also getting purchasers for the peculiar saddles, which were greatly prized by new arrivals from the States, or by those about to return, as curiosities.

We will not tax the patience of the reader by entering into the details of the reception of the brave Americans by Don Refugio; or the almost insane joy and relief of the latter at the recovery of his wife and beautiful daughter, whom he had mourned as dead, and for the repose of whose souls he had had masses said at the cathedral. For the worthy Don had, at great expense, sent out scouting parties in search of them to the Apache haunts, and many had been slain in the fruitless search.

A grand *fiesta* was given by the happy husband and father in honor of the recovery of his loved ones; and no less happy than the old Don was a young Castilian caballero, the affianced of Marietta, who added his gold to the heavy purses which his father-in-law elect endeavored to force upon those who, at the risk of their own lives, had saved his darlings.

The proffered rewards were declined by both Giant George and Arizona Jack; nothing being accepted by them but two fine horses and some richly

embroidered silken scarfs from Marietta and her mother.

Rich presents were also sent to Lena and Marm Holbrook, and gold watches to both Hank and Tom Jones. The two scouts were finally persuaded to accept the gold proffered by Don Refugio, with the understanding that it was to be distributed among the "citiz" who had participated in the fight with El Orso's war-party, which had resulted in the rescue of Marietta from a terrible fate.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, the "Tarantula" made no objections to receiving the purse tendered him as his share, as well as a new suit of clothing, with sombrero and boots of fine workmanship and a complete outfit of silver-mounted arms, with corresponding belt and clasp from Marietta's lover.

These last bore the following inscription—

"PRESENTED TO
"THE TARANTULA OF TAOS,"
BY
MARIETTA REFUGIO,
"THE ROSE OF SANTA RITA."

Belts of like inscription and engraving were also presented to George and Jack, to be kept in remembrance of the donors.

Although urged to remain and attend the grand *fiesta*, our friends insisted upon being excused, as they were anxious in regard to the welfare of Lena Reynolds, and, with tears in their eyes, Marietta and her mother bade them farewell, all promising to return, and also that Lena and Marm Holbrook should visit Tucson.

The parting between the rescuers and Don Refugio was so demonstrative on the part of the latter that our friends were forced to break away abruptly, Giant George asserting that "ther ole coon war 'bout es lunnyfied et gittin' ther weemin back, es he c'u'd ha' bin et losin' 'em."

And out from Tucson's plaza our friends galloped, Jack and George having prevailed upon the "Tarantula" to accompany them to Sardine-box City, and to locate there, for a time at least. They promised to stand by him in his avowed resolution "ter keep on a squar' open trail an' run on ther 'specterble cit lay es long es he c'u'd." This promise he declined, however, to make until they also had agreed that they would not notice or count his drinks.

And speeding on the back trail toward the Pinaleno Range, on their way to Sardine-box City, we will leave them, in order that we may "round up" other characters ere we close our narrative.

A week has passed since the stage rattled up the rise from Sardine-box City, on its way to Gold Gulch, with Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds as "insides," and we now wish to call the reader's attention to the same coach and its occupants, at the distance of two miles from the burg, on their return to the same.

Lena and Marm Holbrook cannot, however, as we now find them, be classed as "insides," or even as passengers; unless, indeed, they have lost their purses, and are working their passage. For Marm Holbrook sits in the driver's seat, clinging with both hands to the sides; one foot braced firmly against the foot-board, and the other slightly elevated, ready to kick the break, when a decline or "short-down" is reached. Considerable anxiety, not to say anger, is manifested on the round, motherly face of the kind-hearted landlady of the Nugget Hotel; her eyes darting glances from the road-bed, to the six fast trotting horses, that "snake" the old "hearse" along at a lively rate of speed, and thence to the driver at her left. This last is none other than Lena Reynolds, or as Hank and the "citiz" have designated her, the "Angel o' Penarlayno Range."

Lena handles the ribbons in a confident manner, and seems, delicate as are her frame and hands, able to control the team without inconvenience; although, as has been shown, Marm Holbrook has been obliged to manage the break.

The explanation of this situation of affairs is plain; for the driver, Jim Doderson, lies outstretched upon the top of the coach, behind them, his mouth wide open, and breathing but faintly. The shameful fact is that Jim is in the condition known as "dead drunk."

The right wheel strikes a stone, causing it to jump, and jolt the coach, and Marm Holbrook to tighten her grip, while her face showed increased anger and anxiety, as she cried out, in a very impatient tone of voice:

"Wa-al, I sw'ar! Ya-as, I sw'ar, meetin'-house 'oman thet I air—dog-gone hit! 'Scuse me, Lena; but I'm plum' pesterfied an' worried, an' my bestest dress air all runkled up, an' my bunnet mashed, an' I do b'lieve my ha'r's down! I've heerd four o' ther new ha'r-pins strike ther wheel an' bound plum' out over ther string-team; jist, I s'pose ter aggravate me. Leastways, hit 'pears so; though I hopes I've gut sense 'nough left ter know they ain't nothin' but wire."

"Jist yeou rumernate on hit a bit. I swan I doesn't see how yer kin b'ar some things. Yer 'pears better, an' looks more like yerself then I've see'd yer since yer 'roved from St. Louis; but mebbe so hit's 'coz ye're skeered, an' ther bleed hes all stampeded to yer cheeks. Hyer we-uns air, a pa'r o' lone weemin, out in Arizone, an' can't git inter a hearse ter take a thirty mile skute, without ther boss o' ther ribbons, thet on'ary no-count cuss, Jim Doderson, what's es slimsy es a ole dish-rag—without he hev gut ter git chuck-full o' bug-juice!"

"Never yeou mind! I hain't lost my grip, an kin kick ther break down ther decline"—this she said,

as Lena offered to change seats—"yer foot's too leetle an' delerkit, an' I'm s'prised ter see yer work ther lines, an' control ther critters, when yer doesn't pear ter hev any more stren'th nor a chicken with a three months' run of old-fashioned pip!"

Lena's face was wreathed with smiles, but she was forced to pay strict attention to the team; and, after musing a while, Marm Holbrook continued:

"Lena, I dassen't think, er I'd go plum' lunnyfied! Ther hull dang'd world air goin' ter destruch' on a cyclone stompede. Whisk' keeps pickin' up ther poperlation an' slingin' 'em on ther whirl, chuck-full o' hellishness, an' plum' over ther range 'fore they knows what's up, er kin say, 'Now I lay me—amen!'"

"But, bless my soul! Thar's Sardine-box City, an' ther Nugget air stan'in' till yit, fer a wonder, though thar seems ter be a break down below thet don't pear nat'ral-like. I'm bettin' my back-ha'r ag'in a 'Pache pappoose's scalp thet Hank's dead gone wi' jim-jams, er else nailed atween four slabs an' planted!"

"Oh, dearie me! I'd be e'ena'most tickled ter death ef I sh'ud find Hank right side up wi' care, standin' nat'ral-like, es he used ter 'fore we struck from Texas, Arizona-way. Waal, I do declar'! I b'lieve ther critters air goin' ter take ther bits atween thar teeth, an' stompede inter ther canyon!"

"Keep yer grip, Lena! I'm down hefty on ther break, an' I kin see ther 'citz' air on hand ter stop ther team. Reckon we'll make ther raffle. Bless my soul! thar's Hank standin' in ther Nugget door, an' I kin tell from hyer thet he's es sober es a deakun. Lena, thar's Giant George and Arizona Jack, an' another pilgrim gallopin' up inter ther burg from towards down range."

"I'm dead sure they hes jist 'roved from Tucson. Hit's a dang'd good thing, we-uns all comin' inter ther burg ter onc't. Hold tight! Ther dang'd 'citz' air goin' ter yell. Thet durned Tom Jones air makin' fun o' me, I'm bettin'."

"Ther hull dang'd burg air lunnyfied ag'in, an' we'll hev ter slap up a crazy-house afore we does a meetin'-house. Oh, Lordy! Lena, I come nigh flip-floppin' off ther hearse, I'm so chuck-full o' glad ter git hum ag'in!"

As the words of Marm Holbrook imply, the coach was rattling down the decline, at the foot of which was Sardine-box City; and as the driver always made a point here of allowing the horses to let themselves out, the animals sprung down the road at a gallop, Lena being unable to control their speed.

As the "citz" saw and recognized the landlady and the Angel, the latter holding the ribbons and the former actually standing upon the break, she having turned her back to the team and gripped the iron bars at the side of the seat with desperation in her endeavor to lessen the terrific speed of the horses. As the "citz" saw the mother of the burg thus situated, they threw their sombreros in air, and roared with uncontrollable laughter, filling the air with their joyous yells.

Giant George, Arizona Jack and the Tarantula galloping into town from the south, also seeing the strange sight, the two former, with anxious looks, loosened their lassoes, quickly coiled and adjusted the nooses, and then driving spurs guided their animals, one to the right and the other to the left, for the purpose of stopping the coach-horses, rendered more unmanageable now by the yelling "citz," who seemed not to apprehend any danger to the women.

The Tarantula also spurred forward, and before the stage reached the Nugget the lassoes of the two scouts hissed through the air, the nooses darting forward and over the heads of the wheelers, then tightening at the same moment. Some of the "citz" brought to reason by this act of the scouts, now sprung to the heads of the string and lead horses, bringing the coach to such a sudden halt that Marm Holbrook was thrown violently from her position on the break, but the Tarantula, who had at once anticipated her fall, spurred his horse forward and caught the shrieking landlady of the Nugget in his long arms, she losing her bonnet, and her back ha'r falling wild, while her costume became disarranged generally, causing the "citz" to actually roll on the ground with insane glee and laughter, after a quick glance had proven to them that nobody was injured.

The Tarantula seated Marm Holbrook on his saddle-horn and carefully smoothed out her dress, without any show of mirth, which act and manner caused that worthy lady to look with regard and respect upon him in the after days, she being ignorant of the fact that his demeanor was occasioned by his fears that she would recognize him as the man who had gone to sleep behind the bar on a certain occasion, and to whom she had given a liberal bath of dish-water, free gratis, and for nothing.

Giant George spurred up to the fore-wheels, his honest, manly face radiant with pleasure, and Lena Reynolds dropped the lines and sprung from her perch into the arms of the gigantic scout.

Hank Holbrook, perfectly sober, "for onc't," as his wife expressed it, no sooner saw Lena safe in the arms of Giant George, than he yelled:

"'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range! 'Rah fer my ole 'oman! 'Rah! 'Rah! 'Rah!'"

"Ker-whoop! Ker-whoop!"

Thus rung the war-cry of the "Tarantula," the "citz" meanwhile staring at him in wonder; for, had they known him previously, his present "make-up" and appearance was so changed that they must have failed to recognize him. He had, for the first time "in a coon's age, shook hands wi' soap," as he expressed it, he had been shaved besides, and this, with his new outfit, made him present rather a fine appearance. His great muscular strength had

been shown by his catching the fleshy and solid landlady, and this caused him to be looked upon with respect.

After he had been formally introduced by Giant George, and his exploits upon the recent trip had been duly detailed, all were delighted to make his acquaintance. Hank, who failed to recognize him, "cottoned" to the "Tarantula" at once. In fact, his peculiar ways, words and manner produced jollity and banished "blues" wherever he went in the burg.

Lena, too, became his firm friend, a fact that strengthened his resolution to "follow straight open trails, and become a squar' cit" instead of a "bad" one.

As a matter of course, there was a great jollification when Giant George distributed the gold and presents sent by Don Refugio, Marietta and Juanita. Hank and Tom Jones were nearly beside themselves and Marm Holbrook nearly went into hysterics over her beautiful black-silk dress.

When the scouts saw the ashes of the burned shanties and were told of the Apache attack, they were quite as much surprised as were the "citz" to know of the squaws and surviving braves of El Orso's war-party that had followed the scouts down the range, and had been defeated by them.

So demoralized had been the mind of poor Hank from his indulgence in his own merchandise that he really believed the horrible tableau that had been gotten up by Tom Jones was the first rum-born vision, the initial views of a case of "jim-jams" which would have ended in his death had not the "citz" taken him in hand.

Even the ride on Don Diablo seemed more like a vision, an experience of the imagination than a reality; as were the Apaches, whom Tom Jones assured him he did not see, as he had been dead drunk all through the fight.

And now, kind reader, leaving Sardine-box City with prosperity in prospective, the worthy sheriff of the burg having gotten the mills in position; the furnaces also being erected and slab sheds over the same—the "Blow-up" promising to be a bonanza—leaving the burg thus, all of our characters for once happy and contented, fully believing their trials and tribulations to be things of the past, we will leave them for the present.

We leave them, with the hope that those who have followed their trail have been enabled to pass some idle moments with a fraction of satisfaction, and learned, at the same time, something of the people and modes of life upon the wild border, where the Apache war-cry rings on the night air—the signal of terrible torture and dreadful death, of fire and blood, and of scenes too hellish to be of earth.

We will state, too, in conclusion, that it is not unlikely that the history of Sardine-box City, and the adventures of its peculiar "citz," may be further detailed in the near future.

THE END.

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